

JOSÉ LÓPEZ PINILLOS AND THE EARLY SPANISH SOCIAL THEATER: THE  
THEME OF CACIQUISMO IN *EL PANTANO*, *ESCLAVITUD*, AND *LA TIERRA*

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## ABSTRACT

MARTHA ALEXANDER: José López Pinillos and the Early Spanish Social Theater: The Theme of Caciquismo in *El pantano*, *Esclavitud*, and *La tierra*  
(Under the direction of José M. Polo de Bernabé)

This dissertation studies three plays by pre-Civil War Spanish playwright, José López Pinillos, that deal with *caciquismo*: *El pantano* (1913); *Esclavitud* (1918), and *La tierra* (1921).

This study considers these plays through the lens of Naturalism, melodrama, the honor play, and the grotesque to show how he harnessed these popular theatrical conventions and the grotesque aesthetic to communicate his condemnation of *caciquismo* as a national problem and a practice that is unjust toward the economically disadvantaged and as the root of Andalusia's social problems of his time.

The first part provides the context for these social plays by López Pinillos. It describes his life and times, his career as journalist, the popular theatrical conventions of his period, plus his own involvement with these and his penchant for the grotesque.

Subsequent chapters discuss each of the selected plays. The chapter on *El pantano* discusses how, through Naturalism and the grotesque, this play shows *caciquismo* as a backward practice that has made rural Andalusia into an environment that is harmful to its inhabitants. The chapter about *Esclavitud* shows how this play uses the honor play, melodrama, and the grotesque to show *caciquismo* as an abuse of power that especially affects the poor. The chapter dedicated to *La tierra* demonstrates how López Pinillos

manipulates melodramatic and highly grotesque elements to denounce the miserable conditions of poverty and exploitation under which vast populations of landless farm workers lived during that time.

This study contributes to the body of knowledge about this playwright who was so popular among audiences and critics during his lifetime but who has received relatively little critical attention after his death. It also contributes to the study of the social theater of the pre- Civil War era, also an area of literature neglected by critics.

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## CHAPTER 1

### JOSÉ LÓPEZ PINILLOS AND THE SPANISH SOCIAL THEATER

Early modern Spanish social theater written between 1895 and 1936 constitutes a neglected genre, but no overview of pre-Civil War Spanish theater could be complete without its examination, because it is an important precursor to the Franco-era social theater of talented and much-celebrated playwrights such as Antonio Buero Vallejo, Alfonso Sastre, and Lauro Olmo. José López Pinillos (1875-1922), the object of this dissertation, is one of those overlooked playwrights. Posthumously he is better known for his novels, both full-length and short. Of these, *Las águilas: de la vida de los toreros* and *Doña Mesalina* are the most printed and re-printed, one as recently as 2002. But his drama, with its important social themes, deserves a closer look because in his time it garnered immense attention. His plays were produced by the top theatrical companies of Madrid in the best of the capital city's theaters with the most famous actors and actresses playing leading roles.

Despite the popularity of his drama during his lifetime, most of his plays were published only once, rarely performed after his death, and then forgotten, and little has been written about López Pinillos until recently. Although in its day the early social theater's popularity rose exponentially in the 1920s and thirties, the onset of the Civil War quelled it and changed its tone to a more politically charged one of faction or harangue. After the war, it was replaced by a theater of evasion, motivated by a desire to forget about the tragedies of the war. The late 1940s brought a rebirth of Spanish social theater, with Antonio Buero

Vallejo's *Historia de una escalera*, produced in 1949. This new social theater was quite different from its prewar predecessor.<sup>1</sup> It is also possible that the reading, publishing, and staging of López Pinillos' work, as in the case of many other playwrights with messages that could have been perceived as a threat to Franco's regime, was repressed and afterwards forgotten. This may explain the resurging interest in his work and in social theater dates from the 1960s and 70s when the Franco regime started to relax its censorship.

Therefore, this study analyses the neglected social theater of a neglected author. Its purpose is to add to our limited body of knowledge about this talented and well-received playwright's social theater by examining three of his dramas: *EL PANTANO*, *ESCLAVITUD*, and *LA TIERRA*. In these three plays, López Pinillos spoke out against the problem of *caciquismo*—a system in which owners of enormous tracts of land (the *caciques*) wielded disproportionate amounts of political power even though they made up a very small minority of the population—in Andalusia, and especially its implications for the rural working class. *Caciquismo* was a huge political and economic issue for Spain, especially in the south.<sup>2</sup> In rural areas of Andalusia, the local *cacique* not only controlled or owned vast expanses of land, making him capable of exploiting landless day laborers, but he also had power over local politics and entire towns, giving him influence over other members of the bourgeoisie who had fallen upon difficult financial times.<sup>3</sup> More specifically, this study will show how,

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<sup>1</sup> The postwar social theater is more subtle in expressing its agenda, yet still highly efficient in transmitting it; thus, at least on the surface it appears to be more 'neutral' than prewar social theater, in which, in scholar Francisco García Pavón's words, "la tesis o corolario [está] servido en bandeja" (137).

<sup>2</sup> *Caciquismo* had deep roots in the south of Spain (it dates back to the re-conquest of Spain from the Moors) and was greatly aggravated by the desamortization of church-owned lands in the nineteenth century.

<sup>3</sup> Paul Preston describes who the *caciques* were and the power that they held as follows:

In the northern smallholding areas, the *cacique* was usually a moneylender, one of the bigger landlords, a lawyer or even a priest, who held mortgages on the small farms. In the areas of the great *latifundio* estates, New Castile, Extremadura or Andalusia, the *cacique* was the

within the favored theatrical conventions and current philosophies of the time, he challenged his audiences to think critically about how *caciquismo* affected Andalusia and how change was desperately needed there while also expressing his own unique style and referring to events that were actually occurring in Spain at the time, thus lending greater realism and urgency to his message.

These three plays were selected from among the nineteen plays that López Pinillos wrote during his literary career.<sup>4</sup> His dramatic works were mostly melodramatic dramas and comedies, some set in rural locations and others in urban settings. They were often based on honor themes, and most contained some amount of social criticism (mainly of the bourgeoisie's frivolity). Various critics have mentioned López Pinillos' involvement with the theme of *caciquismo* in his narrative<sup>5</sup> and his drama<sup>6</sup>, and this study focuses on his social plays that are about *caciquismo*.

Today's studies of prewar theater neglect playwrights like López Pinillos in favor of artists who are, in today's critical opinion, more technically innovative, like Valle-Inclán, Unamuno, and Arniches. Many critics, including García Pavón, who laid the cornerstone for the study of social theater with his *Teatro social en España (1895-1962)*, look down upon

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landowner or his agent, the man who decided who worked and therefore who did not starve. *Caciquismo* ensured that the narrow interests represented by the system were never seriously threatened. (22-23)

<sup>4</sup> *El vencedor de sí mismo* (Teatro Español, 1900), *Hacia la dicha* (Teatro Español, 1910), *El burro de carga* (Teatro Cervantes, 1912), *La casta* (Teatro Español, 1912), *El pantano* (Teatro Español, 1913), *Nuestro enemigo* (Teatro Price, 1913), *La otra vida* (Teatro Español, 1915), *Esclavitud* (Teatro del Centro, 1918), *A tiro limpio* (Teatro de la Infanta Isabel, 1918), *Los senderos del mal* (Teatro Lara, 1918), *Las alas* (Teatro Cervantes, 1918), *Caperucita y el lobo* (Teatro de la Infanta Isabel, 1919), *La red* (Teatro del Centro, 1919), *El condenado* (Teatro de la Princesa, 1920), *El caudal de los hijos* (Teatro de la Princesa, 1921), *La tierra* (Teatro Español, 1921), *Como el humo* (Teatro del Centro, 1920), *Embrujamiento* (Teatro Español, 1923), and *Los malcasados* (Teatro del Centro, 1923; posthumous; finished by the Álvarez Quintero brothers)

<sup>5</sup> See García Barquero, Mainer ("José López Pinillos en sus dramas rurales"), Grard, and Sánchez Bautista.

<sup>6</sup> See Castellón and Paco de Moya.

prewar social theater as an inferior genre that sacrificed quality and innovation in its eagerness to follow current theatrical trends, to propagandize, or simply to create a marketable commodity for commercial theaters. Few of the existing general books about Spanish twentieth century drama and literature mention the social movement in Spanish theater before the Civil War and, when they do, their treatment is cursory and often limited to little more than plot analysis. José García Templado, G. Torrente Ballester, Eduardo Pérez Rasilla, and Francisco Ruíz Ramón are examples of authors of books on the general history of Spanish theater that include brief sections on social theater. Francisco García Pavón has made the closest attempt at an analysis of specific plays in his *El teatro social en España (1895-1962)*.<sup>7</sup> However, recent critical assessments such as Brigitte Magnien's *Violence ordinaire, violence imaginaire en Espagne: Doña Mesalina, 1910* (published in 1994), Fernando José Sánchez Bautista's edition of five of López Pinillos' short novels in *Las novelas cortas andaluzas* (published in 1999 by Ediciones Guadalquivir), the inclusion of *Cintas Rojas* in Eduardo Iáñez Pareja's *Antología de cuentistas andaluces del siglo XIX* (2002), and Didier Awono Onana's *El teatro de López Pinillos, "Parmeno"* (his dissertation, published in 2004), suggest a resurging interest in López Pinillos' plays, novellas, and novels.

The study of López Pinillos' plays is also of interest as an indicator of what the theatergoing public desired to see on the stage and what moved them, as well as what critics liked. Based on the number of stagings, *Esclavitud* is the most successful of all of his plays, having been produced and re-produced over a number of years for a grand total of over 130

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<sup>7</sup> and he has identified elements of plot and character that occur commonly in social plays written before the Spanish Civil War.

representations over eight different seasons.<sup>8</sup> *La tierra* is the next most popular, having had 98 runs over three different seasons.<sup>9</sup> Out of the three plays which are the subject of this study, *El pantano* ranks third in total runs. The publication and translations of some of his plays that appeared in the immediate aftermath of his death in 1922 further prove that López Pinillos was a favored playwright during his lifetime.<sup>10</sup> The positive critical reviews that López Pinillos received, especially of his social theater, and the long runs his plays enjoyed suggest that his audiences at the very least liked his own particular way of presenting the subject matter and were enthralled and even moved for they are always described as applauding in reviews and asking for the author to make an appearance onstage to honor him with more acclaim.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> *Esclavitud* had 33 runs in Teatro del Centro in the 1918 season; in the 1919 season it had 18 runs in Teatro del Centro, 11 runs in Teatro Fuencarral, and 5 runs in Teatro Latina; in the 1920 season it had 8 runs in Teatro del Centro, 3 runs at Teatro Cómico, and 4 runs at Teatro Olimpia; in the 1921 season it had 7 runs at Teatro del Centro and 6 runs at Teatro Fuencarral; in the 1922 season it had 8 runs at Teatro la Latina and 4 runs at Teatro Espanol; in the 1923 season it had 13 runs at Teatro la Latina; in the 1925 season it had 9 runs at Teatro del Centro and 6 runs at Teatro La Latina (Dougherty and Vilches de Frutos 276-277). And it was re-produced yet again in 1932 in Teatro Español.

<sup>9</sup> *La tierra* had 69 runs at Teatro Espanol in the 1920-1921 season; it had 14 runs at Teatro Fuencarral in November of 1921; and 15 runs at Teatro Latina in September of 1922. *El caudal de los hijos* holds third place among all of his plays, having had over 58 runs over four seasons, and *Embruajamiento* wins fourth place, having had 42 showings during one season. This suggests that the audience enjoyed high melodrama and honor plays and that it was interested in the social material of *Esclavitud* and *La tierra*.

<sup>10</sup> *La red* was republished in 1924 by Prensa Popular, and it was translated into German as *Das Netz: Drama in 3 Akten* in 1926. *El caudal de los hijos* was republished in Catalonia in 1935 as a translation into Catalán, titled *L'honra dels fills: drama en tres actes i en prosa*. In addition, *Esclavitud*, which was originally performed in 1918, was published that same year by Renacimiento and in 1919 it was published twice—once by Pueyo and again by Librería de los Sucesores de Hernando. It was performed again in 1932 and published again in 1937 by Llibrería Millá in Catalonia.

<sup>11</sup> *A tiro limpio* (1918) had 5 runs in 1918-1919. *Los senderos del mal* had 7 runs at the Teatro Infanta Isabel and 5 runs at the Teatro Cervantes, both in October of 1918. *Capercita y el lobo* had 15 runs in Teatro de la Infanta in the 1918 season. *La red* had 22 runs at Teatro del Centro in 1919. *El condenado* had 16 runs in Teatro Princesa by Francisco Morano's company in 1920. *Como el humo* had 11 runs in Teatro del Centro in 1920 with Enrique Borrás' company. *El caudal de los hijos* was very successful. It had 38 runs at Teatro Princesa in 1921 and the beginning of 1922; 3 runs at Teatro Español in 1923, by the Francisco Morano company; 10 runs at Teatro Latina in January of 1924 with Enrique Borrás' company; 3 runs at Teatro Princesa in March of 1924 with the Guerrero-Díaz de Mendoza company; and 4 runs at Teatro Latina with the above company in March of 1925. María Guerrero's company also produced it in Montevideo, Uruguay, and

Furthermore, the prestigious companies that produced López Pinillos' plays and the theaters in which they were produced speak of a writing of high appeal to both artists and a cultured public. The majority of López Pinillos' plays were staged at Teatro Español by significant theatrical companies, such as those of Enrique Borrás and María Guerrero, and Madrid's most famous actors and actresses (Julia Delgado Caro, José Tallaví, Carmen Cobeña, Margarita Xirgú, and Enrique Borrás) played the leading roles.<sup>12</sup> Of Madrid's theaters, Teatro Español (along with Teatro de la Comedia) staged the most commercially successful plays, and since López Pinillos' plays incorporated aspects of melodrama, and many were about family honor, they were appropriate for performing at Teatro Español. His plays were also performed in Teatro de la Princesa (another "aristocratic" theater (Dougherty

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according to the critic of *El Liberal* on October 3, 1920, it was received very warmly by the audience: "Según las noticias que acabamos de recibir por cable el éxito alcanzado por la obra ha sido enorme, produciendo una sensación de verdadero entusiasmo en el público," and the play received a "delirante ovación" (2). He also praised López Pinillos by saying "Se trata en «El caudal de los hijos» un tema escénico de extraordinario vigor, desarrollado con la energía y el verismo que son peculiares en su autor" (2). *Embrujamiento* had 35 runs at Teatro Español in April of 1923 and 7 runs at Teatro Centro in December of that same year.

<sup>12</sup> Every theater had its own type of repertoire, and Teatro Español tended to produce masterpieces of consecrated modern artists like Jacinto Benavente, classic works of the Spanish theater, Echegaray-type melodrama, and the Calvo Revilla brothers' adaptations of Calderonian plays. Of other important Madrid theaters, Teatro Lara was of a bit lesser status, although renowned playwrights Jacinto Benavente and Vital Aza (famous for his *sainetes*) staged their plays here. The Teatro Infanta Isabel and Teatro Lara produced high comedy, such as that by Benavente (Dougherty and Vilches de Frutos 26). The Circo Price Theater and Teatro Cervantes were of a more popular type, offering *género chico* (18). Teatros Eslava, Apolo, and Cómico staged "teatro por horas" (a type of zarzuela known as *género chico* that was very popular with the working class). The Teatro Real was also important, but López Pinillos disliked their repertoire. López Pinillos' review of the performance of *Los puritanos*, by Bonci, in the Teatro Real in Madrid (*España* 27 Jan. 1904: 3) reveals how he felt about the state of the Spanish theater and about the repertoire of the Teatro Real and that of the Teatro Español. His review of *La favorita*, by Donizzeti, in Madrid's Teatro Real (*España* 22 Jan. 1904: 2) shows that he doesn't think that the Teatro Real has a very good repertoire, and he thinks that their plays don't require much brain work to critique. He calls their repertoire a list instead of an artistic programming: "El listín del repertorio de la presente temporada del Real—y lo llamo así porque no puede denominarse programa artístico..." (2). He also said that in order to sing and act this particular opera in the Real, you have to have "artistic self-abnegation". In the review of *Los puritanos*, he complains again of the Real's repertoire, which only seems to include productions of old, classic works and mediocre actors. It does not ever take a risk and produce anything new, like in the Teatro Español. In his review of Jacinto Benavente's *El automóvil*, at the Teatro Lara (*Globo* 20 Dec. 1902:1) he laughs at the Teatro Lara, saying that sophisticated (or even barely sophisticated) content could never be found in the pieces that the Teatro Lara chooses to produce. For more information about Madrid's theaters, see Dougherty and Vilches de Frutos 18-19, 70.

and Vilches de Frutos 18)) and in Teatro del Centro. All three of these theaters specialized in producing dramas that appealed to a cultured public (26).

## Social Theater

Throughout the history of the Spanish theater, playwrights have exposed society's faults through their craft. But social conditions during end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth produced a special kind of theater whose central purpose was to point out and criticize injustice, inequality, and antiquated practices and stagnation that exist in society.<sup>13</sup> Its plays were not always about the class struggle, but they always criticize the

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<sup>13</sup> This definition of social drama is a result of the in conceptualization and integration of the thoughts of Pablo Gil Casado, Francisco García Pavón, and Gonzalo Torrente Ballester in their respective books: *La novela social española (1920-1971)*, *El teatro social en España (1895-1962)*, and *Teatro español contemporáneo*. Available definitions of social theater and social literature are hazy at best and at times contradictory. Even writers of books on social literature admit to the ramifications of defining the terms "social," "social literature," "social criticism," and "pueblo;" as well as words that indicate "proletarian," "popular," or "mass" art and culture.

Although he writes about the novel instead of the theater, the concepts and defining qualities which Pablo Gil Casado posits for the social novel in *La novela social española (1920-1971)* are applicable to the theater. Gil Casado says that social novels dedicate themselves extensively—not just a few pages or a brief mention—to treating social, political, and economic realities: "...unas veces se trata de breves menciones, otras se dedican varias páginas a uno o varios aspectos sociales y, finalmente, algunas narraciones se ocupan exclusivamente de esos aspectos. Las obras que pertenecen al último grupo constituyen la novela social" (Gil Casado 17). Gil Casado's basic definition of the social novel is: "Una novela es social únicamente cuando señala la injusticia, la desigualdad o el anquilosamiento que existen en la sociedad, y, con propósito de crítica, muestra cómo se manifiestan en la realidad, en un sector o en la totalidad de la vida nacional" (19, emphasis his). Also according to Gil Casado, given that the social novel is about problems that affect group relationships among people, its content is always of a collective character, with the intention of contributing to produce changes in real-life society (19). Social literature that includes the point of view of the dominant class still has the purpose of denouncing its actions, not of apologizing for them:

Algunas novelas sociales enfocan los problemas y la reivindicación de las clases trabajadoras, cuyas condiciones de vida y labor revelan, declarando explícita o implícitamente el estado injusto o inconveniente de la situación, y dan parte del daño causado a aquéllas[...] Otros novelistas exponen las actitudes y el modo de ser de diferentes grupos, a veces explorando las causas históricas que han contribuido a establecer un cierto estado de cosas, con el propósito de revelar las acciones y la conducta vituperable de uno o varios sectores de la sociedad, para que el lector se dé cuenta de la situación y forme su juicio. El enfoque puede ser por abajo... o por arriba..., en el mejor de los casos es por los dos lados [...] se trata únicamente de señalar la actitud de las llamadas fuerzas vivas, o en otros casos el proceder de la burguesía, de mostrar su forma de ser, no para hacer su apología sino con la intención de que sirva a una censura... (Gil Casado 21-22)

For the reason that the term "social literature" is so broad, Francisco García Pavón decides to limit his study to a specific type of social play. He calls this type of play "teatro social revolucionario" (19):

dominant class, the Spanish national character, and aspire to affect the real world after the theatrical spectacle is over. In the very least, it criticized the societal practices of the bourgeoisie, and more and more during López Pinillos' theatrical career and after his death, up until the Civil War, it expounded upon the problems of politics, the working class' issues, or even explicitly condemned the oppression of the proletariat and—because this time period also made for the emergence of philosophies that achieved great popularity among Spanish progressive liberals and then affected Spanish literature—proposed a Socialist, Communist, or Anarchist society as a solution. Early twentieth century dramas of social themes range in ideology anywhere from reformist, Regenerationist<sup>14</sup>, or progressive to Anarchist<sup>15</sup> or Marxist (García Pavón, 18). This is the theater of interest to this study.

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...en este ensayo, de acuerdo con su elemental consistencia, he reducido mi atención al teatro que, en términos corrientes, se denominaba “de la cuestión social”. A aquellas obras y autores que centran su atención en la lucha de clases; en el drama humano surgido de unas estructuras sociales injustas; en el teatro, en suma, que se limita a exponer estas injusticias de manera tácita o expresa y propugna unas fórmulas revolucionarias o evolucionistas para su corrección. (18)

On the other hand, G. Torrente Ballester in *Teatro español contemporáneo* believes that the term “social” has become too limited to only works that are about the poor classes. and that the terminology related to social theater needs to be more inclusive of other types of plays. In spite of this broadness, he makes a concession that *modern* social theater (from the end of the nineteenth century on) can indeed be limited to the class struggle: “El teatro *social* en sentido moderno; el teatro en que, como concepto o como sentimiento, se dramatiza la *lucha de clases* de forma más o menos enmascarada, aparece a fines del siglo XIX [con Joaquín Dicenta]” (94).

<sup>14</sup> Works of Regenerationist social literature direct attention to both aspects of Spain that make it unique (such as landscape and customs) and also to negative aspects of Spain, or the “Spanish idiosyncrasy”—laziness, unstable government, corruption, lack of initiative, exaggerated affinity for bullfighting, etc, and they proposed hard work, education, modernization, the elevation of cultural levels, and an eye toward the future instead of looking toward Spain's past glory as a panacea for Spain's problems.

Regenerationism was a positivist mentality of the turn of the century that was heavily influenced by Krausism. It was a reaction to the corrupt politics of the Restoration-era government, and the Disaster of 1898 only exacerbated their furor. Inspired by scientific discoveries and the advancement of the scientific method, the positivist mentality took shape in similar ways in different planes. On the social plane, there was interest in the rationalization and order of Spanish society, and on the philosophical and scientific planes, positive thought brought forth the extension of a scientific culture and a philosophy that was closely linked to the development of experimental science (Ayala 33).

The Krausists, especially the later generation of these, known as the Krausopositivists, were fundamental in forming the regenerationist philosophy. The Krausists conceived of society as a living organism; that Spanish society had become sick and degenerated and needed diagnosis and therapy from a doctor in order to regenerate itself. Some thought that Spain needed a deep reform of structure, and others thought that it needed more radical and revolutionary change (Ayala 34).



Although we can trace Spanish social theater's roots to the Renaissance and Golden Age theater<sup>16</sup>, modern social theater that criticized bourgeois society and modern social conditions emerged during the early nineteenth century. During this period, plays in which one could read a social significance about national problems and light criticism or satire of society, were present in the form of comedies (although they mainly take place in past eras). They appeared alongside plays that exalted past history or treated private problems (Torrente Ballester 92). Neoclassical writers like Moratín wrote in protest of marriages of convenience<sup>17</sup>, and a little later on, during the Romantic era, Bretón de los Herreros, whose plays satirize bourgeois society, serves “as a bridge between the Moratinian comedy and the comedy of manners” (Peak 147). Later on, Tamayo's Romantic dramas, *Lances de honor* (1863) and *Lo positivo* (1862) are against the custom of dueling and against materialism, respectively (Peak 149), and Adelardo López de Ayala wrote thesis plays like *Consuelo* (1878), which is against marrying for money. These would later develop into “purposefully social drama” (Peak 147).

Social themes exploded onto the Spanish commercial stage in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The first social plays that addressed the class conflict explicitly were Joaquín Dicenta's *Juan José* (1895) and Ángel Guimera's *Tierra baja* (1896). The

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Joaquín Costa is recognized as one of the founders of the Regenerationist movement, and he believed that Spain needed to be brought up to European standards of modernization. He proposed modernizing infrastructure (especially with regard to reforestation and improvements in irrigation) and education, which as a result would improve industry and farming and help to make Spain a more productive country. Costa was a contemporary of others who influenced the Regenerationists, such as Francisco Giner de los Ríos, also a proponent of educational reform, and Dr. Ramón y Cajal, who thought that poverty, ignorance, and lack of morale were Spain's problems.

<sup>15</sup> Social dramas of an Anarchist nature prevailed and proliferated especially in Barcelona and Valencia.

<sup>16</sup> to be further addressed in Chapter 2

<sup>17</sup> Moratín's *El sí de las niñas* (1806) criticized the education of young women to blindly obey their parents.

portrayal of the class conflict in the Spanish theater would become more and more prolific and militant as history progressed toward the Civil War.

López Pinillos' voice was important among other playwrights of his time who brought social issues to the commercial theater. Their plays ranged from criticism of bourgeois society's pretentiousness and mores and decadent lifestyle, condemnation of political corruption, and promotion of equality between the classes (as in the case of Carlos Arniches<sup>18</sup>, Jacinto Benavente, and Benito Pérez Galdós<sup>19</sup>) to explicit condemnation of the exploitation of the working class by the owning class and the proposition that the former rise up against its oppressor. Examples of the latter can be found in the plays of Joaquín Dicenta,

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<sup>18</sup> Carlos Arniches started out writing *sainetes*, and he soon transformed this into the *tragedia grotesca*. These take place in stifling rural environments (not unlike the setting of López Pinillos' *El pantano*) and censure the decadence of the bourgeoisie, the problem of *caciquismo*, and Spain's patriotism and presumption in the face of the fallout caused by the disaster of 1898 (Monleón 147). *La señorita de Trevélez* (1916), reproaches the rural bourgeoisie's leisureliness and frivolity. Arniches was a Regenerationist, and he proposes hard work and the elevation of cultural levels as the solution, much like López Pinillos does in *El pantano*. His *sainetes rápidos* take place in Madrid; for example, *Los milagros del jornal* (1924), *La flor del barrio* (1919), and *Los pobres* (1918), show the black side of Madrid, especially in its treatment of poverty among the working class. Of special note is *Los milagros del jornal*, which shows how a proletarian family finds it impossible to make ends meet with its paltry wages.

<sup>19</sup> Benito Pérez Galdós began his theatrical career before López Pinillos did, but he is an example of another late nineteenth and early twentieth century playwright in whose works social problems appear.

García Pavón names him as a precursor and not a full-fledged writer of social plays because he relegates the problem to the background: "[S]e le ve pasar como una sombra tras el telón de foro, pero no llega a hacerse patente" (33). García Pavón believes that it is not that he completely ignores the issue of social justice for the working class; it is that he just does not bring it to the absolute forefront in his literature (33), and a social play must have the exposure and denouncement of social injustice as its central purpose. García Pavón continues to say that Galdós' Republican, liberal, and reformist intentions are tacit and there is no premeditated purpose of criticizing social injustice (34).

Some of Galdós' plays criticize aspects of general Spanish society, while others take on an advocacy for the working class; and, like López Pinillos' earlier social plays, he proposes reformist—not revolutionary—measures for their correction: "Galdós was not a revolutionist. He did not advocate the overthrow of order and the *status quo*, but he did recognize the urgent necessity of amalgamation..." (Peak 124). Galdós' *Realidad* (1892) was about adultery, *Voluntad* (1894) criticizes laziness and apathy (*abulia*), and *Doña Perfecta* (1896) is anti-clerical. *La loca de la casa* (1893) and *La de San Quintín* (1894) advocate for the working class in that they propose a mixing of the different social classes (Peak 124). *La loca de la casa* (1893) indeed featured the proletariat in a message that the hardworking proletariat should intermingle with the nobility in order to combine the best of Spain's past with its future leading class; or in Peak's words: "he advocates the amalgamation on the good elements of the industrious proletariat with their counterpart among the aristocracy to found a new and better group of people through whose combined efforts Spain could advance and resume its position of importance in the modern world" (162). The message of *El abuelo* (1904) is that people of lower class can have noble qualities and that nobility of behavior is not solely based on class.

Eugenio Sellés, Gonzalo Jover, and José Fola Iguibide, where they advocated radical politics and espoused Anarchist ideology. Many of these famous Spanish contemporaries of López Pinillos shared his focus on specific regions, like Madrid, Andalusia, or other rural areas as the setting for their social criticism, a topic to be explored in more depth in Chapter 2 of this dissertation. Valle-Inclán deserves a special mention as a very important contemporary of José López Pinillos who, although he was not nearly as commercially successful during his career as López Pinillos and the abovementioned playwrights, expressed disapproval of the bourgeoisie and the Spanish government<sup>20</sup> and explored other social issues in his plays<sup>21</sup> in *teatros de arte* or *teatros íntimos* to a limited and specialized audience that was interested in an alternative kind of theater.<sup>22</sup>

Completing the panorama of the commercial theaters of Madrid during López Pinillos' career, escapist dramas, comedies, and the 'well-made play' with lavish, naturalistic scenery, and melodrama were the preferred forms for a growing bourgeoisie. Meanwhile, the working class was watching more affordable options: '*teatro por horas*,' which could take the form of short parodies of more serious dramatic hits, satirical pieces with or without music, zarzuelas with catchy tunes known as the *género chico*, *sainetes con cantables*, or the cinema.

## This Study

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<sup>20</sup> Monleón states in *El teatro del 98 frente a la sociedad española* that Valle's *esperpentos* denounce the misery and hypocrisy of the 'Official' Spain, which used patriotism to cover up its social and political problems (93).

<sup>21</sup> His *Luces de Bohemia*—written in the same year as *La tierra*—condemns the injustices and oppression suffered by the masses, and represents the wretched condition of the poor.

<sup>22</sup> He is also interesting because he makes his commentary in a similarly violent way to López Pinillos, also using the grotesque and the violent.

López Pinillos' plays followed this important moment in theatrical history, and these surroundings affected his attitudes toward Spanish society and politics, the working class, and his own role as a bourgeois intellectual. López Pinillos' theater under study in this dissertation bridged both the theater of criticism of national problems and bourgeois societal practices at first, and then became more involved with the class struggle. Ideologically, his plays were heavily Regenerationist, but there appears to occur an evolution from a very Regenerationist toward a more Anarchist sentiment, which is most fully represented in *La tierra*; from criticism of the social practices and decadence of the bourgeoisie, to more militant protest of the unjust treatment of the working class. *Caciquismo* was a major concern for the Regenerationists<sup>23</sup> and it would be reflected in literature and theater. The Regenerationists strongly opposed *caciquismo*, and made *anticaciquismo* part of their cause officially in 1901, with Joaquín Costa's famous debate in the Ateneo of Madrid.<sup>24</sup> By the time he wrote *La tierra*, Regenerationism was out of style in the theater; hence, this play shows an increasing flirtation with Anarchism. This evolution is clearly seen in the three melodramas I study—*El pantano*, written in 1913; *Esclavitud*, written in 1918; and *La tierra*, written in 1921. These plays show a shift in focus from the study of *caciquismo* as a national political problem to its implications in the class struggle. *El pantano* denounces its influence on Andalusia but is also considered to be a stain on the entire nation. *Esclavitud* touches on the *cacique*'s exploitation of the working class, and embodies a more militant type of social

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<sup>23</sup> María Salgues, in her article "El teatro de Galdós: La representación enferma de una sociedad enferma de representación", while making the following comment about Galdós, addresses the importance of the theme of *caciquismo* among regenerationist writers: "Si bien Galdós era considerado entonces como uno de los más críticos de la época, no parece diferenciarse radicalmente de unas denuncias que se hacen generales entre los jóvenes escritores. Por ejemplo, el *caciquismo*, blanco de las críticas en *Mariucha*, era un tema central en todos los escritores regeneracionistas, Costa el primero" (282).

<sup>24</sup> "...el anticaciquismo, bandera que levantó Joaquín Costa en 1901 con un resonante debate en el Ateneo de Madrid, luego publicado con el título revelador de Oligarquía y caciquismo como la forma actual de gobierno en España: urgencia y modo de cambiarla" (Mainer, *La edad de plata* 36).

theater, because it argues the need—and right—of the working class to stand up to fight against its oppressors. *La tierra* explicitly condemns this exploitation as it specifically affects farm workers, and it is the most radical of his three social plays. It explores the idea of “striking”—a revolutionary measure—as a solution to the conflict between a large landholder and his workers, and the workers entertain the thought of collective farming and land redistribution as a way to stop the starvation among its peasant characters—in other words, they are considering an Anarchist society as a solution to their dilemma.<sup>25</sup>

Trends of the commercial theater also affected his choice of structure for his plays, and in López Pinillos’ time these included Naturalism, melodrama, setting plays in rural areas (Andalusia was an especially popular setting within the Spanish theater), and the structure of the honor play. Socially-involved plays often took the form of the most popular trends of the commercial theater, and he easily adapted his own artistic expression with these while advancing his social criticism. These conventions in turn went hand in hand with López Pinillos’ crude aesthetic and censorious attitude, and they combined well with his own aesthetic of combining the grotesque and violent surprisingly with the beautiful. He was first known for this general pessimistic attitude toward mankind and Spanish society in his journalism, and it would show up later in his plays. His plays reflected his own particular style of violence, sarcasm, and pessimism mixed with an appreciation of the beauty of rural Andalusia and its customs. He also shows dismay and preoccupation for social issues by alternating beautiful images with ugly and disturbing ones. With these, López Pinillos

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<sup>25</sup> Francisco García Pavón’s *El teatro social en España (1895-1962)* includes López Pinillos’ *La tierra* in the same group as other plays by other pre-Civil war playwrights who incorporated anarchist ideology into their social plays, such as José Fola Igurbide’s *El cristo moderno* (1904), *El cacique o la justicia del pueblo* (1910), and *La sociedad ideal* (1911); Federico Oliver’s *El pueblo dormido*, Marcelino Domingo’s *Vidas rectas*, Francisco de Viu’s *Así en la tierra*, and various works by Julián Gorkin (65-94).

further dramatizes the social problem in rural Andalusia and calls attention to the fact that there is an ugly, corrupt side to its life. The shock value of his aesthetic produces an alienation that forces the public to think critically about a very real and widespread problem and the need to change it. He is trying to shake his spectators out of their passivity and focus their attention on problems so that they may do something about them.

This study is organized in the following manner: Chapter 2 places López Pinillos and his theater within the greater context of his era. It also provides insight into the development of the style for which he became famous. It begins by looking at López Pinillos' involvement in the theater as influenced by historical events surrounding his life and career and popular trends in the Spanish theater. It also discusses how the fashions of the commercial theater of his time, such as the melodrama, the honor play, regional drama, and Naturalism, lend themselves to conveying his message for the need for social justice and toward his penchant for the grotesque and shocking. This chapter dedicates extensive attention to López Pinillos' early career as a journalist because it shows how early on he expresses solidarity with the working class and interest in the land distribution problem in Andalusia. It also documents his inclination toward the aesthetics of Naturalism, the *cuadro costumbrista*, and the grotesque.

Chapter 3 specifically targets *El pantano*. *El pantano* communicates its condemnation of the national problem of *caciquismo* through the lens of Naturalism as augmented by the grotesque and the violent. The play shows that Andalusia was not a rural idyll, but a place trapped in an endless cycle of corruption, both political and moral, caused by *caciquismo*.

Chapter 4 centers on *Esclavitud*, a play that was also against *caciquismo*, but in a different way from *El pantano*. *Esclavitud* uses the violation of a family's honor as a metaphor for how *caciquismo* oppresses the poor. Violation and avenging of family honor thinly veils the underlying problem of how the economically powerful take advantage of the economically weak. López Pinillos' grotesque and violent vision within the context of the melodrama show the humiliation and degradation that his oppressed characters have undergone so that his audience may sympathize with them and wish for justice for them against the evil character. The audience should be able to realize that *caciquismo* is an abusive system which must be changed.

Chapter 5 is about *La tierra*. This play uses the conventions of the melodrama with a heavy admixture of the horrifying and the grotesque to make the audience feel deeply the problems of the farm workers of Andalusia as they struggle with exploitation and starvation. *La tierra* focuses more on the class struggle than the other two plays, and it also exemplifies the growing awareness of Anarchism and the spread of Anarchic sentiment among farm workers.

The conclusion summarizes López Pinillos' techniques and how he persuades audiences to seek social change.

## CHAPTER 2

### JOSÉ LÓPEZ PINILLOS AND HIS SOCIAL DRAMA IN ITS TIME

López Pinillos lived from 1875 to 1922, an exciting period in Spain's history. The world events, philosophical currents, and literary trends surrounding him and popular trends and conventions of the theater, plus his own personal life including his career as a journalist where he developed his own writing style, provided rich material for his writings and furnished the backdrop against which López Pinillos would develop his own social drama. This is the context of *El pantano*, *Esclavitud*, and *La tierra*.

#### **Historical Context: López Pinillos' Changing World**

A confluence of political, economic, and historical factors which coalesced in the latter half of the nineteenth century set the stage for the creation of López Pinillos' social theater. The growing consciousness of the class struggle and events such as Spain's loss of the last of its colonies, World War I, and the Bolshevik Revolution provoked debate on the dominant class' role in an evolving society and led López Pinillos to contribute his own voice.

#### **The Working Class**

Both before and during López Pinillos' life, the working class was gaining visibility by its growing numbers and increasing protests. This agitation was partly due to a better



organization of workers, but it was also spurred on by periods of economic success and decline that simultaneously increased the power of the bourgeoisie and exacerbated the miserable living conditions of the working class. Even before López Pinillos was born, political activity on the part of the working class in Spain was already on the rise. A relatively sustained period of economic growth in Spain beginning in the 1840s (that continued through the 1920s) led to the growth of the proletariat, especially in Barcelona (known for its textile industry) and Bilbao (known for its steel industry). Simultaneously, a prosperous bourgeoisie emerged, and with it a growing gap between rich and poor, powerful and powerless. Stanley G. Payne in *The Spanish Revolution: A Study of the Social and Political* says that the increase in the labor force due to industrial growth led to an increasing self-consciousness in the workers, which in turn led to some isolated economic disputes and strikes (14). Between 1835 and 1855, for example, there were several outbursts in Barcelona and Valencia; and around 1854 there were major strikes in Barcelona. However, Payne mentions that these strikes were more about economic reform (higher wages, the need for more modern machinery) than revolution; at that time Socialism had not yet infiltrated the ranks of the workers: "...before 1868 there were only a few individual representatives of socialist ideology in Spain, and their contact with the workers was minimal" (14-15). In spite of the strikes, which inspired some fear of revolution among Catalan industrialists and large property owners in the south, the middle and upper classes were still very much in control: "by the 1860s, the country appeared to be securely in the grip of a small middle- and upper-class oligarchy" (Payne 15). Despite the increase of protests by the working class in the industrialized areas, the situation in the countryside was much less organized. The

peasants were still “cowed and mute, save in the Carlist regions, and the urban lower classes were without organization or representation” (15).

The 1860s would see the spread of Syndicalism throughout the world, starting with the First International Congress in Brussels in 1868. The arrival of Giuseppe Fannelli, an anarchist and follower of Bakunin, who had been sent to Spain by the First International in November of 1868 to recruit members, was responsible for the introduction of anarchist ideology into Spain as well as for more agitation among workers. According to Paul Preston in *The Spanish Civil War: Reaction, Revolution, Revenge*, the Bakuninist Fannelli’s arrival was key to establishing and spreading anarchist ideas and militancy in Spain, especially in the south, since labor conditions there made it especially fertile ground for the reception of these ideas:

Land hunger was creating an increasingly desperate desire for change, the more so as the southern labourers came under the influence of anarchism. . . . His [Fannelli’s] inspirational oratory soon secured him his own evangelists who took anarchism to one village after another. The message that land, justice and equality should be seized by direct action struck a chord among the starving day labourers, or *braceros*, and gave a new sense of hope and purpose to hitherto sporadic rural uprisings. Fannelli’s eager converts took part in outbreaks of occasional violence, crop-burnings and strikes. (23-24)

However, these outbreaks were poorly organized and easily defeated by the local powers, resulting in fluctuation between attempts at revolutionary activity and a sense of powerlessness and apathy on the part of the farm workers (24). Meanwhile, the Spanish public was gaining awareness of the land distribution problem in the south. A land census taken in 1900 in Andalusia by the government raised a greater consciousness of the land distribution problem. While no reforms came out of this census, at least the north and center of Spain became aware of the problem (10), and by the 1920s, most of the general Spanish public knew about the Andalusian land problem.

Gradually, the proletarian class was gaining ground, not only in numbers but also in its political voice in Spain.<sup>26</sup> Shortly after the First International Congress, Spain itself was the site of two more workers' congresses, in Barcelona in 1870 and Valencia in 1871. New political parties that supported the working class were founded during López Pinillos' childhood: in 1879, the Socialist political party PSOE was founded, and the UGT, a workers' union closely associated with the PSOE, was formed in Barcelona in 1888.

During López Pinillos' later childhood and early teenage years, the growth of socialist and anarchist militancy accelerated more dramatically. Significant workers' strikes were organized in 1890, Cánovas, the leader of the Conservative Party was assassinated in 1897 by an Italian anarchist, and there were more workers' strikes in 1902, when López Pinillos was just starting out as a young and impressionable journalist in Madrid.

In the Fall of 1910, at the Congreso Nacional de Trabajadores, organized by the anarcho-syndicalist group Solidaridad Obrera, the CNT was formed by uniting various smaller groups that were part of Solidaridad Obrera. The CNT was an anarcho-syndicalist trade union that would become the principal syndicate in Spain until the Civil War—even more predominant than the UGT. Although it rejected individual violence and parliamentary politics in favor of revolutionary syndicalism, the actions of some of its members soon morphed into violent industrial sabotage, leading to the group's illegalization (Preston 29-30). Meanwhile, in rural areas, during the period of 1910 to 1920, peasant strikes became much more revolutionary than ever before.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> The social question even became a part of the Catholic Church's confession in 1891, with Pope Leo XIII's pontificate of social action and education and in his *Rerum Novarum*.

<sup>27</sup> Before 1910, when peasants would strike, their motive was mostly for economic reform—not so much for revolution.

## World Events

The Disaster of 1898, when Spain lost its last colonies in Puerto Rico, Cuba, and the Philippines as a result of the Spanish-American war, changed and challenged the way that the Spanish people felt about their nation because it symbolized the absolute end of Spain's role as a major world dominator. Four centuries previously, Spain had established itself in this position because of its acquisition and exploitation of its colonies in the Americas. Although especially in the earlier part of the nineteenth century Spain had already lost the majority of its American colonies, this final loss prompted Spanish intellectuals, especially the Regenerationists and the Generation of 1898<sup>28</sup>, to examine the Spanish identity and Spain's problems.

World War I and the Bolshevik Revolution marked the end of imperialism in the world and the loss of the aristocracy's power. This rupture with the social and economic structures of the past created an environment in which power was up for grabs. It took a toll on the political legitimacy of Spain's Restoration-era government<sup>29</sup>, where Spanish politics were characterized by instability and corruption, and the turn-taking system between the liberal and conservative parties only served to secure political power for the landed oligarchy (i.e., the *caciques*) and the urban bourgeoisie (Preston 22). This government was notorious for its election-rigging practices and its condonement and even active support of *caciquismo*,

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<sup>28</sup> López Pinillos is often considered as coming in on the heels of the Generation of 98, and he shares certain aspects of this group while also embodying differences. The Generation of 98 was similar to the Regenerationists, but whereas the Regenerationists were more scientifically and politically oriented, the Generation of 1898 was more philosophical, apolitical, contemplative, and aesthetically-oriented (Ayala 35). The Generation of 98 is an example of how extensively the Disaster and the effect that it had on Spanish society was expressed in literature. Although not all writers of that time period fall into the category of the Generation of 98, the event of the Disaster was expressed by different authors in different ways. The Generation of 1898 was also influenced by Krausism and Regenerationism.

<sup>29</sup> That is, the restoration of Alfonso XII: "The geometric symmetry of the Restoration system—with political power concentrated in the hands of those who also enjoyed the monopoly of economic power—already under pressure, was shattered by the outbreak of the First World War" (Preston 30).

a problem that affected López Pinillos' own experience.

### **López Pinillos and his Life and Journalism**

López Pinillos was born to an affluent family near the Plaza Nueva in Seville. According to some critics, he spent part of his childhood in Osuna, a small agriculturally-based town in the heart of Andalusia, but José María Osuna, in his article “Escritores sevillanos que se olvidan: José Luís López Pinillos «Parmeno»” places his childhood and adolescence in Carrión de los Céspedes (179). Having an agricultural economy based on the cultivation of olives and having had a long history of powerful owners of large tracts of land, Carrión was a place of *caciquismo* and resulting agitation among landless peasants. While studying law as a young adult at the Universidad de Sevilla, financial problems arose in his family, which were partly caused by the death of his father, but José María Osuna claims that they were caused by a feud between López Pinillos' family and the local *caciques* of Carrión. This would change the course of his life, as he was forced to suspend his law studies and move to Madrid at the age of twenty-five to seek his fortune as a journalist. His childhood and adolescence in Carrión impressed upon him a familiarity with the life ways, attitudes, and problems of rural workers, and this, plus his firsthand experience of the wrath and power of a *cacique* helped him to provide such a credible testimony of the problems caused by *caciquismo* and of farm workers' predicament in his fiction and it helps to explain his vehement opposition to *caciquismo* in his social plays.

López Pinillos started his literary career as a journalist in Madrid, and like many young writers of his time, he earned a paltry living while writing plays and novels on the side. López Pinillos worked for Madrid's most widely circulating newspapers, and he had

distinguished colleagues. He spent the rest of his life in Madrid, working for such major newspapers as *El Globo* (from 1902 to 1903), *Alma Española* (1903-1904), *España* (1904-1905), *La Correspondencia de España*, *El Liberal de Bilbao* (1906-1907), *El Liberal de Madrid* (1907), *Faro* (1908-1909), and *El Herald de Madrid* (1908-1918).<sup>30</sup> He reviewed plays, he interviewed famous actors and actresses, and his co-workers went on to become the most distinguished writers of the *Generación del 98*. In *El Globo* (a newspaper that supported liberal politics), López Pinillos was a theatrical critic and editorialist (he signed under the pseudonym “Puck”), in the company of Pío Baroja, Enrique Jardiel Poncela, and Pablo Iglesias, who contributed editorials during the same period that he was there. While at *El Globo*, he wrote theatrical reviews at Madrid’s Teatro Lírico, Teatro Español, and Teatro de la Comedia.<sup>31</sup> In addition, López Pinillos had some distinguished colleagues in *Alma Española* (a socio-political and cultural journal), including theater critic and author José Martínez Ruiz (also known as Azorín), Ramón Maeztu, Pío Baroja (again), Fray Candil, Luis Bonafoux, Juan Ramón Jiménez, Pérez de Ayala, and others (O’Riordan viii);<sup>32</sup> Martínez Ruíz (“Azorín”), Luis Bello Trompeta, and Ramiro de Maeztu in *España* (a conservative newspaper); and he worked for *El Herald*, where he signed under the pseudonym “Parmeno”, a character from *La Celestina* associated with honesty, in a column called “Charlemos,” that gave his opinions on current events and other topics.

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<sup>30</sup> Recompilations of his articles and interviews have been published in *Hombres, hombrecillos y animales* (1917), *Lo que confiesan los toreros* (1917 by Renacimiento and again in 1987 by Turner), *Los favoritos de la multitud: Cómo se conquista la notoriedad* (1920), *Vidas pintorescas: Gente graciosa y gente rara* (1920), and *En la pendiente: Los que suben y los que ruedan* (1920).

<sup>31</sup> Among his reviews of many different playwrights, López Pinillos wrote reviews of Jacinto Benavente’s plays *La noche del sábado* and *El hombrecito*. Later twentieth century historians of the Spanish theater have named Benavente as an influence on López Pinillos.

<sup>32</sup> He only had one entry in *Alma Española*, an article titled “El hambre de los periodistas,” that complains about the poor pay and difficult economic conditions for journalists.

His early career in journalism provided a medium in which he could develop and express his political convictions and alliances and to cultivate the aesthetics and techniques that later characterized his plays, and his articles show his proclivity toward certain trends in literature and elements that are signature qualities of his aesthetic: sarcasm, cynicism, a pessimistic attitude, and shocking and horrifying imagery. Additionally, much of the subject matter covered in his articles will provide compelling material for his novels and plays, including the ones under examination in this dissertation, giving greater credibility to his fiction. His early journalism evidences that he was well informed about the state of poverty in which the rural workers of Andalusia were living and their powerlessness in fighting for better conditions (many times due to their lack of organization).<sup>33</sup> His articles show that he had a great awareness of and a great sensitivity toward the problem of land distribution and the resulting starvation in rural Andalusia.<sup>34</sup> He was often sent as a correspondent to cover events in Andalusia, where he witnessed the effects of these problems further. López Pinillos' contact with starving, underemployed, and striking workers would provide him with material for a realistic testimony of their plight and the dynamic of poor *braceros* that are totally dependent upon indifferent and gluttonous landowners for *Esclavitud* and *La tierra*. It is obvious from examining his newspaper articles from the beginning of his career that he felt

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<sup>33</sup> In the article that appeared in *El Globo* on May 7, 1903, titled "En Lebrija: Impresiones de nuestro redactor Sr. Pinillos: Los braceros. Sin trabajo. La sequía. Sociedad de resistencia. Hablando con un anarquista," López Pinillos touches on a failed strike that resulted from conflict between Anarchists and other left-wing political parties and workers' organizations. "La limosna," published in *El Globo* on March 20, 1903, reflects the situation of the failure of grassroots peasant uprisings in rural Andalusia because they were fighting for disparate and abstract ideals instead of having a concrete purpose and defined tactics.

<sup>34</sup> In the article that appeared in *El Globo* on February 27, 1903 titled "La muerte," he goes to a small town in Andalusia to the wake of an old farm worker whom he knew. Pinillos ruminates on the destruction and misery that he has seen hunger cause repeatedly, especially in Andalusia: "He sentido frío en el alma contemplando espectáculos parecidos que no me impresionaron. He desfilado ante muchos cadáveres allá en mi tierra, en Andalucía, en un pueblecillo hambriento y miserable que se desmorona roído por la incuria" (1). Referring to Andalusia as "mi tierra" also shows his deep connection with it and its workers and a yearning for the welfare of its people.

a special bond with and sensitivity toward Andalusia and its people, especially its farm workers and that he was well aware of the issues that they faced.

López Pinillos' concern for the social and political issues surrounding his life would appear in his newspaper articles, where he expressed his solidarity with the working class and especially with the people of Andalusia much earlier than he manifested it in his plays. From early on in his career, López Pinillos establishes a connection of commonality with the working class: he considers himself a part of the *pueblo*, especially with the Andalusian *pueblo*<sup>35</sup>. In his journalism, he expresses sympathy for the suffering of the working poor and he expresses feelings of solidarity with them. The young López Pinillos himself was impoverished in the beginning of his writing career<sup>36</sup>, and in two of his articles written during this time in his life, he complains about how poorly remunerated his profession is. A particular example of his unity with Andalusian farm workers is contained in “La muerte,” about an old worker’s funeral wake in a small, rural town that appeared in *El Globo* on February 27, 1903. He feels that, like the worker, the writer or intellectual is also a type of worker—a worker of the mind who only has his brain power to sell:

“Pero eso es allí, en mi tierra, entre labriegos, entre gente cuyo capital es la fuerza física; eso pasa entre los esclavos del terruño, entre la gente humilde que vive y muere mirando á la tierra, atesorando céntimos, con pasiones primitivas...Pero cuando muere uno de los nuestros, sin más capital que los sesos; esclavo de la pluma; enamorado eterno del ideal...” (1).

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<sup>35</sup> López Pinillos’ mini-series of articles called “Por Andalucía” reveals his awareness of the lack of work for farm laborers. The article “En Lebrija: Impresiones de nuestro redactor Sr. Pinillos: Los braceros. Sin trabajo. La sequía. Sociedad de resistencia. Hablando con un anarquista” (*El Globo* 7 May 1903: 1) describes a scene in the town’s plaza early in the morning. The *braceros*, or landless day laborers, are hovering around the plaza, waiting for someone to come along and offer them a day’s work. Pinillos explains that the workers are not on strike; there is no work for them because the drought has made it so that there are no crops to harvest. Ironically, he juxtaposes this description to one of the luxurious life of the politicians who go into the Casinos to socialize.

<sup>36</sup> Corina Alonso’s *Relación de Galdós con su época (1900-1920): Aportación a una historia menor de la literatura española a través de López Pinillos, Antón de Olmet y Tomás Borrás* has letters written from López Pinillos addressed to Galdós telling him about his financial strain and asking Galdós to help him get a better-paying position at a better-paying newspaper.



He feels that while the peasant is a slave of the land, the writer is the slave of the pen.

López Pinillos has not only sympathy for and solidarity with, but he also has a deep admiration for farm workers and their resilience in spite of deprivation. “Desde Sevilla: La ciudad y la feria: De nuestro redactor Señor Pinillos” (*El Globo* 21 Apr. 1903: 2), describes that the farm workers know that there will be lots of starvation this summer and winter and that they are used to fighting against it in creative ways. He clearly admires them for their strength and determination to survive in the face of misery. He calls the old worker with whom he talks a “veteran”: “Y auguraba desdichas, calamidades terribles; la pérdida de las cosechas, la falta de trabajo...Legiones de braceros hambrientos acudirían á los Ayuntamientos pidiendo la limosna de un jornal [...]” (2). In the same article, to emphasize their predicament, López Pinillos uses words like “pucheros vacíos”, calls the farm workers “los esclavos del jornal”, and says that they will “reventar[se] de miseria” (2).

His journalism also shows his conviction that those in privileged positions must take action to help the poor workers and it also shows his growing affinity with the Regenerationists. This is documented especially in the way that he expresses his reaction to the devastating effect that the Disaster of 1898 had on the Spanish national character and on his own morale—he was about to embark upon his journalistic career when it happened. Many of his earliest newspaper articles, especially in *El Globo* and *España*, document his advocacy for hard work<sup>37</sup>, a typically Regenerationist solution. Although he demonstrates affinities with the Regenerationists and the Generation of 98, López Pinillos criticizes these

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<sup>37</sup> One example is the article “La limosna,” which reflects López Pinillos’ adherence to Regenerationism’s call for hard work. He complains that Spain has become a country of beggars, where everyone is asking for handouts: from priests, to *señoritos* who have lost their money over the generations, to factory workers, to field workers, to people who have simply chosen a profession that doesn’t pay well. He believes that in order to advance, Spain should work hard to fight for concrete goals, even though begging and non-organized protesting may appear to be easier.

groups for being in an ivory tower, distanced from the lower class, making suggestions but not acting upon them to actually help the poor.<sup>38</sup> López Pinillos believes that the intellectuals must take an active stance in helping the oppressed and that the oppressed must become active as well. He himself practices activism through his writing about the poor and the problems in Andalusia, and both *Esclavitud* and *La tierra* propose that the oppressed should rise up against their oppressors.

### **Preferences and Conventions of the Commercial Theater in López Pinillos' Era**

Naturalism, a form of realism, is dedicated to representing life in a convincing (or 'true-to-life') way, while especially aiming to show the effects of environment and heredity on its characters. It often sets out to prove a moral or a thesis. Influenced by positivism, the advance of the scientific method, and Darwin's findings on the adaptation of living creatures to their environment, characters are presented as case studies in human behavior or social problems with the intention to determine the underlying causes of characters' behavior. It often functions as a challenge to social orthodoxies. José López Pinillos has indeed been called a late naturalist by Harold L. Boudreau of the *Columbia Dictionary of Modern European Literature* (485-486). He embraced it as a way to communicate his message of justice for the working class, first in his journalism and later on in his drama.

Naturalism became stylish in the Spanish theater around the time that López Pinillos began to write for Madrid's newspapers. Madrid audiences enjoyed naturalist plays, and by

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<sup>38</sup> For example, in the article "El alma española," he thinks that their solutions for Spain's problems—patience, prudence, and order while working and studying—are cruel: "Y un día nos encontramos en el viejo solar castellano, árido, inculto, abandonado... Y unos hombres nuevos nos hablaron cruelmente de trabajo, de paciencia, de constancia, de orden, de estudio, de prudencia" (1) because patience and prudence on the part of the working class are not viable means for change. He also opines in the article that the Regenerationists' solution—work—sounds all well and good in theory, but in the end, the upper classes, who he says in the same article are afraid of working, would still use their power and influence to oppress the poor (especially the *caciques*.)

the 1890s there were already examples of successful naturalist plays in Spain, such as Galdós' *Realidad* (1892)—a box-office success, having been shown on 22 consecutive nights in Madrid and also performed in Barcelona and elsewhere, and revived in 1904 (Peak 119, 121)—, Echegaray's *Mancha que limpia* (1895), and Dicenta's *Juan José* (1895) and *Daniel* (1907; about oppression of mine workers), to name a few. At first, Spanish Naturalist playwrights were influenced by Echegaray's neorromantic style and later by modernism and symbolism. The influences of Ibsen and French and Italian playwrights also arrived,<sup>39</sup> and Echegaray is credited with bringing Ibsen's ideas to the Spanish theater. The first performance of an Ibsen drama in Spain was *An Enemy of the People*, performed in Barcelona in 1893, and a mutilated adaptation of it was performed in Madrid in 1896. *Ghosts* was performed in Madrid in 1906 and *A Doll's House* in 1917.

The naturalistic approach to representing the world aimed to create an illusion of reality through acting style<sup>40</sup>, stage design, costume, setting, and its portrayal of ordinary people and their daily lives. 'Ordinary' means 'non-noble,' and in López Pinillos' lifetime, this mostly meant the bourgeoisie, but the working class would also protagonize naturalist plays. Attention became focused on the family in the family setting, and especially in the

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<sup>39</sup> Ángel Berenguer cites Jesús Rubio Jiménez' *Ideología y teatro en España: 1890-1900*:

Las ideas de Zola fueron al principio su catecismo, pero progresivamente se enriquecieron con las de los autores nórdicos, las de los simbolistas y, ya hacia 1900, con las de algunos nuevos dramaturgos franceses e italianos. Su zolaísmo inicial, con todo, se hallaba lastrado de elementos procedentes de la dramaturgia neorromántica de Echegaray y su crítica social debe no poco a la literatura satírica y periodística (página 232). (qtd. in Berenguer 24-25)

<sup>40</sup> López Pinillos' naturalist plays are also melodrama, even though some of the practices of naturalism conflict with those of melodrama. For example, the naturalists (especially Stanislavsky) rejected codified acting gestures and expressions and rhetorical dialogue in favor of more natural diction and tone. The exaggerated melodramatic acting style runs contrary to this style. Also, melodrama does not have the depth and complicatedness of character that naturalism does because its characters are either good or bad. Instead, naturalism avoids assigning moral categories of good and bad to characters; its characters are neither all right nor all wrong. This non-judgmental depiction of characters is actually a rhetorical tactic to push a specific agenda. López Pinillos was not alone, though, in combining melodrama with naturalism: Shaw's naturalistic plays also followed the conventions of melodrama, especially with its overt theatricality.

living room. Realistic and three-dimensional settings with real objects from everyday life helped to emphasize the presence of the environment and its effect on characters. Some aspects inherited from naturalism in López Pinillos' plays are: the influence of the environment and heredity on characters' actions, the descriptiveness of the living conditions (even those of workers), the intent to reproduce informal and regional language, and in some cases even violence and sensationalism.

*El pantano* is the most clearly Naturalistic of his social plays with regard to the importance that it places on environment and biological inheritance. In this play, López Pinillos shows that Andalusia has been made an unhealthy place because of the corruption that *caciquismo* creates. *El pantano* particularly presents the way that the characters' environments and their parents' temperaments affect their behaviors and influence their fates. Similar to Ibsen's *Ghosts*, the children in the family in *El pantano* (and to an extent in *Esclavitud*) suffer the repercussions for their parents' past actions in their physical and mental health as well as in their behavioral patterns. And López Pinillos' naturalist plays go up against societal norms, prejudices, and practices.

Emile Zola, a key proponent of naturalism in the theater, argued that a more 'natural' form of theater was needed to "enable audiences to engage with the significant ideas of the moment, and drag the theatre out of its apparent dark age" (Leach 98). Thus, it was meant to address current social problems. According to Christopher Innes, in his *A Sourcebook on Naturalist Theatre*, Naturalism is "serious dramatic treatment of significant contemporary issues" (1). The portrayal of the daily lives of ordinary people can lead the spectator to see that "great events can be the result of the most trivial incidents, which had the effect of bringing major social issues down to a human scale" (7), and so characters can represent a

problem that occurs on a wider scale, even national problems. Zola also fought against the Romantics' tendency to "dress up reality lest it look too disreputable in public;" instead, he proposes that theater represent reality the way it is. This led many Naturalist writers to represent sordid and unpleasant aspects of life. López Pinillos certainly does all of this in *El pantano* in that he represents the national problem of *caciquismo* by presenting the day-to-day lives of the members of an 'average' rural bourgeois family.

Naturalism is considered to be a precursor to more radical social theater. Naturalism was a response to a society in conflict, and some of the most classic naturalist plays represent conflicts in the role of class (and of gender) in their societies and their characters transgress bourgeois social codes, many times bourgeois family values. In *A Doll's House*, Ibsen's Nora challenges the traditional female role with regard to her responsibility toward her family. *Ghosts* also does this through its female protagonist who must choose whether or not to promote the memory of her dead husband as an upright citizen to her son and the rest of society, when he was really a cheating scoundrel. She must choose between fulfilling her duty to her husband's memory by promoting a false, although morally acceptable, image of him and fulfilling her duty to tell the truth. Spanish Naturalist writer Emilia Pardo Bazán, known for narrative and essay, also wrote ten plays between 1898 and 1906 that refute women's roles as submissive and dependent upon men in favor of women's dignity and liberty. Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard* portrays the decadence of the bourgeoisie, and it explores the need to adapt to modernization, much like *El pantano* does. All three of López Pinillos' social plays in this study reject the social code of the poor's subordination to the rich and the idea that social class should determine one's destiny.

López Pinillos' affinity for Naturalism is obvious in his plays<sup>41</sup>, but the influence of Naturalism was already strong for him in his journalism, as it contains examples of how one's environment and other conditions have an effect on him or her.<sup>42</sup> Whether or not the subjects of his articles or the characters in his fiction have the choice to behave as they do or not, Pinillos sends a clear message that something can and should be done to change society, whether by eliminating hunger, as in the footnoted article, or, as in the case of *El pantano*, by

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<sup>41</sup> López Pinillos' most naturalistic plays that comment on rural corruption are *La casta*, which premiered in Teatro Español, March 13, 1912, and *El pantano*. Some inklings of naturalism are also visible in López Pinillos' first play, *El vencedor de sí mismo* (1900). In one particular scene, of this play, environment and inheritance are discussed in explaining how the family's chauffer was shot by his wife because he had abused her and tried to kill her. This leads to a discussion on the barbaric behavior of the working class, where Andrés explains that the chauffer's horrible behavior of abusing her in the first place was merely the influence of the crude environment in which he was brought up and his lack of education:

LUIS. [...] Tomás [the chauffer] es un pobre hombre.

ANDRÉS. ¡Un infeliz!... Sino que, por distraerse, le patea las costillas a su hembra.

LUIS. Y, no obstante, es bueno: tan bueno como cualquiera de nosotros.

ANDRÉS. (Inclinándose cómicamente.) ¡Oh! ¡Tanto honor!... Es que dan ustedes mucha importancia a una cosa que es naturalísima, que no debía extrañaros. Tomás se ha criado en una cuadra, carece de educación y no sabe reprimir sus instintos... No ha logrado aprender el arte elemental de la hipocresía, en el que todos somos maestros, y nos enseña su alma sin tapujos, tal como es, con su luz y su sombra [...]. (11-12)

This dialogue says that the lower class is so savage because it has not learned how to repress its violent instincts, like the upper class has. At the same time, the dialogue is also a jab at the upper class and its hypocrisy. This scene points out the lack of education among the rural working class and the lack of civility in rural towns among both the lower and upper classes. Combined with other criticism in the play of the bourgeoisie's ignorance of the rural workers' starvation, this scene points out the need for reform in rural Andalusia even more. The men feel sorry for the murdered chauffer and blame his abusiveness on his background and upbringing. This particular use of naturalism comments on the lack of education in Andalusia as making it into a breeding ground for barbarism.

*La casta* makes a similar argument for the need for education and culture in rural Andalusia. It shows that the lower classes, although they may acquire money, cannot overcome their coarse behavior. It is made clear toward the end of the play that the social class of one's parents and that one's environment affects his or her personality and that the individual can never change that, especially when José proclaims: "Algunas veces me figuro que no soy yo el autor de todas mis atrocidades sino mi casta entera, mis abuelos—mozos de labor, gañanes, ¡esclavos!—que resucitan en mí, y que, ahora que pueden gritar, gritan" (45). The message of the play, besides a criticism of the system of honor, which is outdated and damaging to everyone, is that the backward environment is detrimental to the lower-class characters, and it makes them uncivilized. It points to the need to change the environment to combat the uncultured behavior of the lower class.

<sup>42</sup> The article "El zorro hambriento," from his column "Charlemos" (*Heraldo de Madrid* 12 Feb. 1908: 1), asks for clemency for the jailing of a man named Juan Fuentes, who pretended to be a policeman in order to receive free food at a bar. Pinillos says that hunger makes people do misdeeds: "Porque las hazañas del hambre, poco escrupulosa y muy fecunda en pícaros recursos, encontrarán siempre en nosotros una bondadosa indulgencia..." (1). He clearly states that people are products of their environment: "Ciertas faltas son hijas del ambiente, y si estudiamos las osadías que las producen y los prejuicios que las originan, no las castigaremos con rigidez" (1).

hard work and self-motivation, by eliminating ignorance and lack of education, and by eliminating *caciquismo*.

Most of López Pinillos' literary works take place in Andalusia. Independent of his natural talent for representing this region, he was very much in step with a trend that is very closely related to Naturalism: setting literature in specific regions, fashionable in both Spain and Latin America toward the end of the nineteenth century, just as López Pinillos was beginning his career. Naturalism's (and also *costumbrismo*'s) rise to great popularity in the Spanish and Latin American theater led to this vogue of the rural drama, and on both continents, Naturalism was the "expressive vehicle" for rural dramas (Mainer, *Literatura y pequeña burguesía* 91).

Felú y Codina's play *La Dolores* (1891) started the craze for regionalist drama in Spain and laid the groundwork for its form and content, and critics credit Dicenta for giving the rural drama its definitive form a few years later in *El señor feudal* and *Daniel* (Holloway 19-20). Within Spanish drama, urban regions such as Madrid and rural regions such as Asturias, Aragón, and especially Andalusia became preferred settings for plays. The rural drama would remain popular during the first thirty years of the twentieth century, and top-notch Spanish authors during the same time period also cultivated it, such as Ángel Guimerá, Jacinto Benavente, Ramón del Valle-Inclán, and, after López Pinillos' death, Federico García Lorca.<sup>43</sup>

Revitalized interest in regional identities also contributed to the popularity of rural and regional dramas. This was helped along by the growth of the bourgeoisie in regions that

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<sup>43</sup> Harold R. Boudreau and Díez-Echarri and Roca Franquesa have made connections between López Pinillos' and Benavente's rural dramas of the same time period (*La Malquerida* was Benavente's best), and Boudreau additionally finds similarities between López Pinillos' rural dramas and Lorca's later rural trilogy (Boudreau 486).

were undergoing great economic growth. This newly economically powerful group became interested (and perhaps wistful) in identifying with its regional roots and traditions, and playwrights catered to its tastes. Plus, in Spain, the Regenerationists' and the Generation of 98's focus on regional pride and *lo castizo*, or what is typically Spanish, also contributed to regional and rural drama being in demand during López Pinillos' career. The most famous among Madrid's theatrical actors were involved with the rural drama during its heyday (Mainer, *Literatura y pequeña burguesía* 91).

Rural drama ranged anywhere from having the intention of merely entertaining the spectator and as an escape from reality to simultaneously entertaining him while conveying thought-provoking social messages. On one end of the spectrum, some authors idealized rural life with a conformist or conservative purpose.<sup>44</sup> Some plays appealed to the urban bourgeoisie's idealization of the countryside<sup>45</sup>, who believed that there was an honesty, honor, sincerity, and peace in the countryside which could not be found in the city and their desire to see regional stereotypes in an idealized countryside (Mainer, *Literatura y pequeña burguesía* 92-93), removed from the pressures of business and commerce, rather than showing them reality.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Within the genre of the novel, Ricardo León's novels *Casta de hidalgos* and *El amor de los amores* and Palacio Valdés' anti-industrial novel, *La aldea perdida* (Mainer 94) are examples, and in the theater, zarzuelas such as *Gigantes y cabezudos* (1898), *La alegría de la huerta* (1900), and *La tempranica* (1900) come to mind.

<sup>45</sup> "la idealización eglógica del campo y lo campesino que caracteriza a toda burguesía urbana" (Mainer, *Literatura y pequeña burguesía* 92-93).

<sup>46</sup> The Álvarez Quintero brothers were wildly successful contemporaries of López Pinillos, famous for their numerous *sainetes* that featured the popular class as its main characters and many of which are set in Andalusia. They portrayed the Andalusian worker as a caricature, and they did not make it a priority to denounce the problems that the working class suffered.



Other writers, like López Pinillos (and also the very successful Jacinto Benavente<sup>47</sup>), chose to show the countryside as a not-so-idyllic place. Plays that portrayed idealized rural and regional areas as places of peace and honesty co-existed with rural dramas about corruption in the rural environment and tragedies that took place in rural settings, and among Spanish playwrights, Andalusia was an especially popular setting. Rural drama with social messages was popular in Latin America at about the same time that it was popular in Spain, especially in the Río de la Plata region and in Mexico, Cuba, and Chile.<sup>48</sup> These dramatists'

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<sup>47</sup> He, like López Pinillos, took his bourgeois audience's shortcomings (i.e., the hypocrisy and inauthenticity of bourgeois society) and threw them in its face, and he preferred Andalusia as a setting for his rural dramas, especially for his rural tragedies. In fact, Felipe B. Pedraza Jiménez and Milagros Rodríguez Cáceres comment in *Manual de literatura española* that the Andalusia represented in Benavente's rural dramas (for example, *La Malquerida* (1913)) was most unpleasant and rather passionate and raw: "La imagen del campo en los dramas rurales es la cara bronca, en vez de la idílica tradicional; es el lugar ideal para que se desaten las pasiones y los instintos" (512). This is a lot like López Pinillos' Andalusia. Pedraza and Rodríguez mention that José Carlos Mainer believes that Benavente's rural tragedies do not comment on social issues pertaining to the countryside, that he merely uses it as a neutral backdrop for the action of the tragedy (512).

<sup>48</sup> Uruguayan playwright Julio Sánchez Gardel was the third most important playwright of the rural theater of his time (Dauster 34-35). His best works are *Los mirasoles* (1911) and *La montaña de las brujas* (1912), both plays with *cuadros de costumbres*, primitive and obsessive passions, folkloric elements, and powerful, crude language. It was exaggerated and brutal, and it made a strong impact on the spectator (Dauster 35). The rural *Rioplatense* theater had a strong sociopolitical message and was significant to the revolutionary social theater in Latin America. The rural *Rioplatense* theater began in the late nineteenth century when European influences and theories of the theater (such as Ibsen, Italian Naturalism, and socialism) were eventually added to gaucho plays, a primitive example of which is the circus-tent pantomime adaptation of the gaucho novel *Juan Moreira*, that had tones of social militancy and that was simple and rudimentary enough to reach an uncultured public. Uruguayan anarchist Florencio Sánchez would transform the rural *Rioplatense* theater into one much more critical of oppression in rural areas. His most famous work, *Barranca abajo* (1905), denounces the displacement of the rural worker from his land and is of a Naturalist and Socialist nature and does expose social problems, although Sánchez does not propose revolution as a solution to the rural workers' problems (Dauster 33).

The theater of the Mexican Revolution had themes and formats similar to the early social theater in Spain and to that of López Pinillos in that it rebelled against *caciquismo*. Additionally, it spoke out against mercantilism and the power that large foreign companies had in Mexico (Díez-Echarri and Roca Franquesa, *Historia de la literatura española e hispanoamericana*, 1498). Federico Gamboa's *La venganza de la gleba* (1904, although not produced until 1914) may be the first serious attempt in Mexican theater at denouncing the peasant's plight, opines Frank N. Dauster (46). Another Mexican playwright, Ricardo Flores Magón, was an anarchist activist who wrote plays from jail. His famous play *Tierra y Libertad* was written in 1908.

In Cuba, José Antonio Ramos wrote *Tembladera* (1917), about the exploitation of the poor, the bourgeoisie's decadence, and monopolies owned by foreign landowners (Dauster 70).

Chilean author Antonio Acevedo Hernández wrote about oppressed rural workers for an audience comprised of the bourgeoisie. *La canción rota* (1921) denounces the *campesinos'* slave-like working conditions and follows the honor play model. He mixes anarchism with Christian images of redemption.

portrayal of rural characters, especially rural working-class characters, was opposed to those who portrayed them as jolly, caricaturized people.<sup>49</sup>

As Naturalism was devoted to realistic depiction of everyday life and emphasis on environment and surroundings, it was influenced by and maintained aspects of *costumbrismo*. *Costumbrismo*, a type of realism, preceded the trends of Naturalism and the regional drama and became important in Spanish and Latin American theater around the middle of the nineteenth century. At the turn of the century, *costumbrismo* was on its way out, although elements of it were still very present in the theater of the early twentieth century, thanks to a resurging interest in regional themes—especially rural regions and the region of Andalusia—and the popularity of Naturalism.

The *costumbrista* novel is comprised of a string of *cuadros costumbristas* which are tied together by a plot. In the novel and other types of narrative, such as the essay and journalism, to which it is closely related,<sup>50</sup> the *cuadro costumbrista* is a sketch that depicts

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<sup>49</sup> This is true for the portrayal of working-class characters in plays that take place in both rural and urban environments during this time period. Traditionally, the role given to working-class characters was one of comic relief or counterpart to the upper-class characters. During the Romantic era and the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the more serious roles were normally given to the upper-class characters while, if present, the roles played by the humble classes were minor and not to be taken seriously: “Durante el XVIII y el XIX—siempre salvadas excepciones—el dramaturgo continúa infimizando la importancia del pueblo en la escena, que queda relegado, casi exclusivamente, para rellenar y amenizar con bromas y chuscadas la línea maestra del argumento” (García Pavón 31). This trend lasted until the end of the nineteenth century: “A partir de aquellos dramas históricos del XVII, con muy discretas salvedades, hasta finales del XIX, al pueblo no le cabe en la escena otro papel que el subalterno de gracioso que hemos apuntado” (29). The *género chico* and the *sainete* continued to caricaturize the popular class in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, even though the lower class frequented this type of theater: “El paleta, el chulo o el flamenco, son el amaneramiento sancionado de esos papeles peyorativos que en la sociedad atribuye al hombre de la calle, primero el dramaturgo y luego el sainetero” (García Pavón 40-41). But the zarzuela *La Verbena de la Paloma* foreshadowed the more serious role that the pueblo would soon play (29), and with time, the working class’ role became more serious, and so they were beginning to be portrayed as people who were aware of their disadvantaged circumstances who take action in trying to resolve them. After having been relegated to a second-class or comic role, and even absent from the stage for the most part, the common man finally takes on a serious role—and a leading role—in *Juan José*, where a humble brickmason must avenge his common-law wife’s honor against his supervisor.

<sup>50</sup> Orlando Gómez Gil says that *costumbrismo* has very close ties to journalism and that it may even be an offshoot of it in that both desire to spotlight contemporary and popular customs and because both are of a popular character. “[...] El cuadro costumbrista nació indisolublemente ligado al periodismo, quizás por su

the local traditions, customs, and way of life of the popular sector of the society of a particular region, and its attention to realist detail is almost photographic. The *cuadro costumbrista* can be a *cuadro ameno* that has the intention of simply entertaining the reader or spectator by providing him or her with a pleasant and picturesque scene of beauty and quaintness<sup>51</sup> or it can also show more squalid aspects of working-class life. The style of the *cuadro costumbrista* may be straightforward, or it may have satirical or critical overtones, as in Mariano José de Larra's *artículos de costumbres* that he published in periodicals at the end of the nineteenth century. *Costumbrismo* also exists in the theater. Examples of Naturalist and *costumbrista* elements are mixed into López Pinillos' journalism as well as into his drama and his narrative, where they work to help put across the author's sociopolitical commentary and express his black vision of mankind and censure society's vices.

*Costumbrismo* in the theater depicts the day-to-day lives and customs of regional people, but it usually romanticizes or idealizes these people and their regions. The Álvarez Quintero brothers are a prime example of *costumbrismo* in the Spanish theater, and their plays especially idealized (and stereotyped) Andalusian people and portrayed Andalusia as a beautiful rural idyll with quaint customs. The *zarzuela* also comes to mind as an example of presenting regional people, places, and customs (such as the *barrios bajos* of Madrid or rural Andalusia) as through a rose-colored lens. Sometimes *costumbrista* plays served as

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carácter popular y su anhelo de resaltar costumbres contemporáneas" (Orlando Gómez Gil, *Historia crítica de la literatura hispanoamericana* 344— from: <http://www.monografias.com/trabajos19/costumbrismo/costumbrismo.shtml>; consulted on July 25, 2008 at 12:08pm EST).

<sup>51</sup> "Los cuadros de costumbres [...] son bocetos cortos en los que se pintan costumbres, usos, hábitos, tipos característicos o representativos de la sociedad, paisaje, diversiones y hasta animales, unas veces con el ánimo de divertir (cuadros amenos) y otras con marcada intención de crítica social y de indicar reformas con dimensión moralizadora" (Orlando Gómez Gil, *Historia crítica de la literatura hispanoamericana* 344— from: <http://www.monografias.com/trabajos19/costumbrismo/costumbrismo.shtml>; consulted on July 25, 2008 at 12:08pm EST).

entertainment and escape for the audience, but other times, plays that contained elements of *costumbrismo* made social criticism.<sup>52</sup>

López Pinillos did not write *costumbrista* plays *per se*, but he did incorporate aspects of the *cuadro costumbrista*, such as representation of workers' daily lives and customs, landscape, and the theme of modernization as a threat to the rural way of life. There are arguments which say that *costumbrismo* in the narrative—this can be applied to the theater just as well—is too shallow a representation of the harsh reality of the real lives of the people it depicts.<sup>53</sup> By contrast, López Pinillos successfully incorporates *costumbrista* elements into his plays for the purpose of denouncing injustices existing in society.

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<sup>52</sup> Elements of *costumbrismo* are often found within social literature; for example, Cuban playwright Marcelo Salinas included *costumbrista* scenes into plays which Frank N. Dauster qualifies as social theater, and Pablo Gil Casado says that the *cuadro costumbrista* persists in New Romanticist social novels that take place in the countryside. This information suggests that *costumbrismo* can have power to denounce social injustice.

<sup>53</sup> There are similarities between *costumbrismo* and social literature, but *costumbrismo* in and of itself does not make a work of literature 'social'. *Costumbrismo* presents workers' daily lives and their personal problems, but without any other critical perspective or transcendence: "La novela costumbrista de artes y oficios es simplemente repertorial, contiene cuadros que dan idea de la existencia obrera (el personaje va al trabajo, se describen sus tareas, vuelve a casa, habla con su familia y amigos, sale de paseo, come, bebe, se enamora...), sin otra transcendencia o sentido. En conjunto la visión es pintoresca, amable, con su pequeña tragedia familiar o individual en el centro" (Gil Casado 301). Whereas in social literature characters are representative of the class of society to which they belong and they represent what the rest of their class is suffering, Gil Casado warns that in the *costumbrista* work, the character's purpose is to call attention to a picturesque aspect of that class, and that in social literature the picturesque should be only a very small part of who the character is. Gil Casado also warns that when *costumbrista* scenes focus on what is typically Spanish or on local color, they distract the reader from penetrating into the reality of the social problem at hand. And if they focus on the *beauty* of old traditions or the rural setting, they call attention away from the ugliness of this sector of society's life:

Las prolijas descripciones costumbristas, por muy fieles que sean fotográficamente, no le sirven al lector para penetrar en la realidad, son más bien un obstáculo que impide su captación. El énfasis en lo típico castizo y en el colorido local es, además, una transmutación de la realidad, pues la cosa no es su color o su casticismo; y lo mismo podría decirse de la sistemática reproducción de la fonética o del léxico popular.

[...] Aunque tocan a veces aspectos candentes de la sociedad, su concepción de la existencia y de las circunstancias, es superficial e ingenua. Fijan su atención en el pueblo, pero es únicamente para presentar sus actividades pintorescas; cuando describen tierras y paisajes no es para hacer ver la pobreza y abandono en que pueda hallarse una región, sino para pintar la belleza primaria del campo y de los pueblos. El sentimiento del paisaje, los cuadros de costumbres, incluso los tipos, pueden poseer fuerza, estar basados en la realidad, pero no se ahonda nunca, y la visión se limita a los elementos necesarios para crear una estampa que no disturbe la conciencia del lector. Si se hace alguna referencia a las fuerzas represivas, es sólo para presentar los aspectos amables, nunca para exponer los abusos de los

Landscape and tradition play a very important role in his plays. Characters comment on the beauty of the Andalusian countryside and on their beautiful traditions, and they also lament the advent of modernization. But for López Pinillos, landscape and tradition serve a different function than in the *costumbrista* plays of the Hermanos Quintero. Instead of having these portray a beautiful and perfect place, he turns it around so that these serve as contrast between the beauty of the place and the suffering that goes on there. For example, in *La tierra*, the farm workers, who find themselves forced out of the land that they love by their greedy landlord and by unjust land distribution, speak lovingly about their beautiful landscape and the plants and birds that live there. And in *El pantano*, when certain characters lament modernization as destruction of their traditional way of life, it actually serves to point out the desperate need for it. López Pinillos already showed a tendency toward the *cuadro costumbrista* in his early journalism as a way to criticize society, both in rural and urban areas. These will be discussed later as a demonstration of the way in which his personal writing style included both beautiful and grotesque imagery in order to communicate his condemnation of social problems.

Another audience favorite in Spain during López Pinillos' career, the melodrama was born in France during the eighteenth century. Melodrama, including translations and adaptations of French works, enjoyed great success in theaters across Spain during the entire nineteenth century and throughout José López Pinillos' career. Thus, it makes sense that all

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poderosos y las inquietudes y problemas del trabajador. De todas las formas, el costumbrismo ambientó sus obras en escenarios populares, y así consiguió llamar la atención sobre algunos aspectos del pueblo. (74)

This is not a problem in *El pantano*, *Esclavitud*, or *La tierra*, where Juan and his family in *El pantano* represent everyone who suffers from the corruption of the *caciques* in southern Spain and all of those who suffer from *abulia*, and Don Pedro and his daughter Julia of *Esclavitud* and José and Caridad from *La tierra* represent the miserable conditions in which farm workers all over Andalusia were suffering at the hands of their landowners. All of López Pinillos' protagonists in *El pantano*, *Esclavitud*, and *La tierra* have too many real problems and are too miserable to be picturesque.

of his plays would incorporate aspects of melodrama, as that medium would provide the greatest chance of box-office success while also allowing him to communicate his social concerns. Both *Esclavitud* and *La tierra* rely especially on the properties of the melodrama to influence their spectators.

Since its inception, melodrama has been a companion to social and political protest and subversion.<sup>54</sup> Melodrama is a useful forum for raising audience consciousness about sociopolitical issues, and early Spanish social plays often conformed to the melodramatic form. Shawney Weisler Anderson's doctoral dissertation "Melodrama and the Beginnings of Spanish Social Drama" demonstrates that early Spanish social dramatists chose melodrama to express their ideas. She also shows that through this method the playwright was able to raise public awareness of social problems, to denounce those responsible for the problems, and to entertain audiences, all at the same time.<sup>55</sup>

Melodrama is effective for playing out issues on the playwright's and audience members' minds, as it addresses issues that are very pertinent to the audience's here-and-now.<sup>56</sup> Issues of importance to López Pinillos' urban bourgeois audiences would have

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<sup>54</sup> Following the French Revolution of 1830, melodramas were often written against the clergy and the rich. For example, the French playwright, journalist, and socialist politician Félix Pyat wrote revolutionary melodrama against rich, corrupt bankers, and his plays influenced the Revolution of 1848 (Gerould 187). Additionally, actor Frédéric Lemaître, who "transformed conventional moral melodramas into socially inflammatory plays," made *L'Auberge des adrets* (1824) into a rage against society's injustices and a support for anarchy, revolt, and subversion (Gerould 187). Louise Michel, a member of the Paris Commune (which was established in 1871) and a militant anarchist, chose melodrama as *Nadine*'s format because she believed that it would best reach her audience at the Bouffes du Nord, a working-class theater (Gerould 190). In England, too, melodrama often conveyed political messages to audiences. After the French Revolution, melodrama in England often sent radical messages against the English government and called for an English revolution.

<sup>55</sup> Weisler Anderson includes a brief analysis of López Pinillos' *La tierra* on p.237-245.

<sup>56</sup> In their book *Melodrama: The Cultural Emergence of a Genre*, Michael Hays and Anastasia Nikolopoulou examine melodrama (especially nineteenth-century English melodrama) as a form that played out society's preoccupations, or: "the ways in which the melodrama served as a crucial space in which the cultural, political, and economic exigencies of the century were played out and transformed into public discourses about issues ranging from the gender-specific dimensions of individual station and behavior to the role and status of the "nation" in local as well as imperial politics" (viii).

included defining their class position vis-à-vis the increasingly-visible proletariat, the land distribution problem, concerns about Spain's role in the world, and concerns about politics. Melodrama's heightened emotions, hyperbole, stark contrasts, sentimentalism, and situations of extreme anguish and violence create tension and suspense and maintain audience interest while pointing to the need for social change. They cause an alienating effect, making the spectator see ordinary things in an extraordinary way. Peter Brooks points out how melodrama's exaggeration and "heightened dramatic gesture" (including its sentimentalism) make what might have been ordinary more interesting and calls attention to certain things:

These enunciations, like the situations that frame them, possess the precise "sublimity" of melodramatic rhetoric: the emphatic articulation of simple truths and relationships, the clarification of the cosmic moral sense of everyday gestures. We are near the beginnings of a modern aesthetic in which Balzac and James will fully participate: the effort to make the "real" and the "ordinary" and the "private life" interesting through heightened dramatic utterance and gesture that lay bare the true stakes. (Brooks 13-14)

Melodrama displays a Manichaen view of good and evil. It positions good characters in polar opposition to bad characters, and it shows the spectator who the good characters are in opposition to the bad characters. Heroes and villains are clearly delineated by their actions, their words, and their appearances. It is obvious who the good guys are and who the bad guys are, and López Pinillos certainly creates sympathy with his 'good' characters and hatred toward his villains by showing the contrast between their goodness and badness. Melodrama also presents sympathy-generating and heart-wrenching situations that will also help win the spectator over to the protagonists' side and push him to want a resolution for the protagonists, and López Pinillos certainly does this, too.

A brief examination of the differences between melodrama and tragedy may help demonstrate how melodrama argues for social change. Melodrama and tragedy are similar in

that their heroes struggle with conflicts between themselves and their worlds and that both types of drama produce catharsis in the spectator. But, with regard to conflict, whereas the tragic hero struggles with cosmic forces or with his own internal demons, the melodramatic protagonist struggles with forces that are exterior to himself and very concrete, such as another person, a group in society, or nature (Sharp 269). That the forces of good and evil represent very concrete people and situations in the real world drives the spectator to desire justice for those who are suffering in the real world and to also fear (and hate) that force that causes the suffering.<sup>57</sup> The audience in the melodrama feels relieved by the hero's triumph over the villain and liberation from turmoil (Brooks 35), and it feels hopeful that a new society will emerge out of the conflict between good and evil in the real world. The audience leaves the theater with hope that society can be changed after the action of the play has finished (Sharp 272). Seeing that the melodramatic hero has the chance to succeed in his struggle with his enemy may give the audience the sense that they can also become empowered to do something about an unjust situation in the real world. The spectator of a tragedy, however, feels no relief from seeing the hero prevail because the tragic hero cannot escape his fate, and the hero's actions do not change his society<sup>58</sup> (Sharp 269-270). In the end the audience accepts society as it is and does not wish to do anything about it.<sup>59</sup>

In the plays under study in this dissertation, López Pinillos assigns the 'bad' roles to the *caciques* and the 'good' roles to the economically disadvantaged characters; thus, the

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<sup>57</sup> Eric Bentley says that because the audience identifies with the melodramatic hero, they also share his fear of the object causing his distress (37).

<sup>58</sup> As a consequence, he must leave his society, usually by dying (Sharp 269-270).

<sup>59</sup> "We may admire the tragic hero's action, but we do not, nor would we if we were faced with his decision, necessarily accept it as our own. We learn from tragedy what a single human is capable of, but we remain Fortinbras or the elders of Thebes. And that means that we accept this society, this world, rotten as we may think it to be" (Sharp 270).



protagonists' struggles in *La tierra*, *Esclavitud*, and *El pantano* all point the finger at the large landholders for exploiting their unique position of power and for causing the problems in the rural Spanish south. López Pinillos' goal is for the spectator to side with the oppressed worker, to feel his same fear, and to realize that the *cacique* (and by extension, the system of *caciquismo*) is the horrible enemy and to feel outraged by it and to want to do something to ameliorate this situation. With difference to melodrama's preference for ending in strict poetic justice, López Pinillos' endings seem to have less of this, especially in the botched attempt at revenge by the protagonist of *Esclavitud*, and the bittersweet ending of *La tierra*, where the townspeople may be freed of their oppressor, but they still have to leave their homes.

Another trend that was ever-stylish in the commercial theaters of Madrid during López Pinillos' career was the honor play—a throwback to the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The Spanish public had been enjoying honor plays ever since the Golden Age, and Calderón de la Barca and Lope de Vega are the most representative of this genre. The Golden Age honor play is important to the development of the early modern social play, and early Spanish social plays often featured honor themes as a way to communicate their social messages (García Pavón 64-65). The earliest of modern social plays (such as Dicenta's *Juan José* and *El señor feudal*) inherit some aspects of their plots from Lope de Vega in that they use the lower classes as the protagonists in a problem of honor, and critics<sup>60</sup> agree that Lope de Vega heavily influenced those who wrote social theater concerned with the working class being abused by the landowners. The concept of a member of the working class standing up to someone of a higher class in a dispute having to do with honor is reminiscent of Lope de

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<sup>60</sup> such as Manfred Lentzen, in his article "Del teatro social al teatro político: sobre la evolución de los dramas de Miguel Hernández," (75)

Vega's *Peribáñez y el Comendador de Ocaña* and *Fuenteovejuna*, where peasants confront noblemen to defend the honor of peasant women. In *Esclavitud*, a *campesino*'s family honor is transgressed by the evil landowner who has a sexual relationship with his daughter and he must find the courage and the dignity to defend it by killing his landlord.

Honor themes and love problems in the early social theater (for example, in *Juan José*) act as a metaphor for social problems that lie underneath the surface. Michael Hays and Anastasia Nikolopoulou, editors of *Melodrama: The Cultural Emergence of a Genre*, note that the political message of the previously mentioned English melodramas was often masked behind stories of heroes and betrayed lovers (ix), much like López Pinillos uses honor themes to express his political protest, as in *Esclavitud*. The theme of family honor in *Esclavitud* illustrates the abuses that the dominant class wreaks upon the poor class because they have the economic and political power to do so. In *Esclavitud*, the protagonists eventually kill the rich landowner to resolve the violation of their family honor. *La tierra* has a somewhat related situation where a farm worker kills his landlord in the end, but instead of being over family honor, it is so that the *cacique* will not prevent the farm workers from leaving his town in hopes of fleeing from oppression. Similar to Lope de Vega, López Pinillos' characters in these two plays kill the perpetrator; however, Lopez Pinillos' social plays are not exact reconfigurations of the honor play: in Lope de Vega's plays, the King and Queen pardon the peasants and restore order, but López Pinillos does not recommend a happy return to the old order; instead, he challenges the validity of the current system by insisting that the lower class has a right to stand up to the higher class and by suggesting that the victims' lives will not go back to the way that they used to be—they will move on to a

different way of life, less dependent upon their oppressor. And they do not need a higher authority to pardon them.

By their very natures, all of these literary and dramatic currents lend themselves not only to addressing social issues and to facilitating the expression of concerns about and criticism of rural Andalusia, but they are also conducive to the grotesque and violent.

The grotesque in a text produces a reaction of both horror and pleasure in a state of unresolved tension in the reader or viewer.<sup>61</sup> The conflict between these reactions is unsettling. The text often involves incongruity, whether from the combination of disparate elements or from the horrible subject matter and the tone in which it is presented: for example, it could be presented in a poetic tone, a matter-of-fact tone, etc.). With regard to tone, it is important to remember that (in contrast to a work of fantasy) the material is presented as if it were reality. Often, the horrific subject matter deals with the abnormal, the deformed, the violent, the macabre, the unpleasant, the disgusting, and the cruel—or basically anything that causes repulsion or horror or even a feeling of being threatened. The text may cause pleasure because the incongruity of it is comic, because the viewer derives pleasure from the artist's wit, or from perceiving the joke or point that the artist is making; it could come from a sick pleasure at the suffering of others; a barbaric delight in seeing taboos flouted (for example, in obscenity or in celebrating bodily functions unmentionable in polite society); or it may cause defensive laughter to laugh off the feeling of being threatened by the material.

The grotesque fulfills a range of functions, including (but not limited to) satire, ridicule, indulgence in the ludicrously ugly, fanciful decoration, playfulness, and even

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<sup>61</sup> Philip Thomson's book *The Grotesque* (London: Methuen, 1972) is an excellent resource for understanding the grotesque.

expresses a tortured and agonized view of the human condition. The viewer's reaction and the incongruity of the material presented can cause an alienating effect by taking the familiar world and rendering it strange through its deformations, hopefully forcing him to see his world from a fresh perspective (Thomson 18). It is very valid and realistic, in spite of its strangeness, and the more horrible the subject matter presented is, the more real it becomes (17). Victor Hugo illustrates this idea in his preface to *Cromwell*, where he says that *Macbeth's* witches are more real than the Greek Eumenides: "Certain it is that the Greek Eumenides are much less horrible, and consequently less *true*, than the witches in *Macbeth*" (370). The grotesque can also promote consciousness of the need for social change to the audience by emphasizing man's imperfect and tragic nature, giving the reader or viewer an awareness of tragic reality and situations (Thomson 11).

The grotesque contributes toward the pessimistic and sarcastic tone of López Pinillos' writing and his recurrence to sensationalism signature qualities of his aesthetic. Rafael Cansinos-Assens comments that López Pinillos' Andalusia is an unfriendly, inhospitable, tragic one: "Por una predilección natural [por ser nativo de Sevilla] ó por una preocupación de escuela, su Andalucía es una Andalucía trágica, de largos lutos y de labios rojos, una Andalucía hosca y ceñuda, tal la que nos dejó ver *La Semana Santa en Sevilla*, de Eugenio Noel" (196), and noticeably ugly and disturbing images easily find their way into his journalism, drama, and novels. The playwright will transfer this way of showing the beautiful together with the horrific in his theater, especially in his three social plays, where the ugly, degraded, and evil coexist with the good and the noble.

López Pinillos' grotesque aesthetic goes well with melodrama. Characterization is important to melodrama, and the grotesque and the violent go hand in hand with it to

distinguish the evil party from the good party and thus to point the finger at who must be protected and who must be punished. (In the case of the social plays examined in this study, the hero as well as the victims are of the working class and the villain is the landowner or *cacique*.) Some of the protagonists in his social plays are portrayed as grotesque to show that they are degraded and victimized, while the heroes are presented as noble in character and dignified. Whether noble or degraded, though, the purpose of melodrama is to make the audience identify with the protagonists, suffer with them, and root for them to prevail. The villains are rendered with the grotesque to show their evilness and to provoke fear of them. Violent acts and horrible images create extreme situations for the characters and all of them express emotional extremes. The audience feels the protagonists' anguish at having to overcome excruciating circumstances, and sympathy and pity are generated. It feels fear from the villains' expression of anger and it will sympathize with the good characters and wish for the punishment of the bad ones. His aesthetic also goes well with the honor play dealing with sexual fidelity because it is conducive to violence and gore in that the typical way of resolving the violation of family honor is by killing the violator and sometimes even the woman involved.

Naturalism, and including its leftover vestiges of *costumbrismo*, because of their dedication to realism and their propensity toward showing the seamier aspects of local life, are favorable to grotesque and violent images. Both facilitated López Pinillos' penchant for the pessimistic and horrific. Very typical of López Pinillos' style, Naturalism often emphasizes crude, sordid, and mechanistic aspects of life and its authors seem to have a somber outlook. As literary critic Dominique Grard says in her book *Imágenes de Andalucía y sus habitantes en la narrativa andaluza de principios del siglo XX (1900-1931)*, it is no

surprise that López Pinillos brings out the worst of human characteristics in his characters because it is a part of Naturalism:

Partiendo de la célebre frase de *La novela experimental*, “Nuestro análisis será siempre cruel, porque nuestro análisis llega hasta el fondo del cadáver humano”, [Y. Chevrel, in *Le naturalisme*] muestra que la obra naturalista, calificada a menudo de pesimista, afirma: “Más que de pesimismo, es de crueldad lo que hay que hablar” (15). La empresa de López Pinillos no es otra. Una de sus características reside en el hecho de que se complace en describir la “bestia humana” en sus personajes, y en los tres planos: físico, mental y moral” (110-111).

López Pinillos’ portrayal of brutality, degeneration, and backwardness in Andalusia are also partly due to the influence of naturalism on the rural drama. Vance R. Holloway comments about this as it pertains to *El pantano*:

Mainer attributes López Pinillos’ underscoring of brutality and degeneration to the influence of naturalism in the Spanish rural drama. If naturalism is understood as the deterministic confluence of biological, environmental, and social forces, *El pantano* is the most closely representative text, and indeed, Mainer cites it as a prime example. (27)

He focuses on the negative aspects of the countryside because he wants his audience (or his readers) to notice that rural Andalusia needs to evolve and to modernize itself. Cecilia García Antón’s article “La figura del hijo pródigo en el drama rural de López Pinillos: perspectivas de la rebeldía” is about how the catalyst for the actions taken to remedy the problem postulated in the play usually comes from outside the rural setting, and she writes:

[López Pinillos d]efine la vida rural a través de sus obras, como atrasada y primitiva. Los campesinos no han modificado sus costumbres y ritos; sus pasiones son mostradas de forma muy cruda.

Con este retrato de la vida campesina López Pinillos intenta demostrar que la gente del campo necesita evolucionar y ser educada en las costumbres más modernas de la ciudad o «el extranjero». (519)

Depictions of landscapes and of traditions and customs and of everyday life of the popular sector of his society appear in López Pinillos’ journalism and his plays, but the

beautiful and picturesque quickly become transformed into the ugly and the ominous. Grand manifests that his oscillation between the extremes of beautiful and ugly, serious and absurd, and comical and severe is part of his originality and that it shows his pessimism: “La originalidad del escritor estriba precisamente en el hecho de que sale así del engranaje que lleva el espíritu crítico y la lucidez hasta el pesimismo total, al desembocar en la farsa y en lo irreal” (38) and Fernando José Sánchez Bautista, in “Las novelas cortas andaluzas de José López Pinillos “Parmeno” (1875-1922),” points out that López Pinillos writes descriptions and scenes that are absurd, caricatural, and brutal (18). Rafael Cansinos-Assens adds that the grace and serenity of Andalusia become marred in López Pinillos:

Pero este signo de entronque con la tradición literaria de su tierra [de Andalucía], empáñase en Pinillos por esas turbiedades especiales que son su característica. El sosiego andaluz, la serenidad del ritmo alterase en él por la violencia realista de su arte, que le lleva á emborrascarlo y á enconarlo todo y le aparta del original estado de gracia con que las cosas se muestran al artista. (195)

Even López Pinillos’ *costumbrista* elements that praise the countryside seem to have dark undertones and serve to point out the poverty that the rural workers live under. The review of *El pantano* by Manuel Bueno that was published in the *Heraldo de Madrid* on May 17, 1913 expresses how violently the play treats rural life: “Si «El pantano» es sencillamente una serie de episodios de la monótona vida lugareña, el dramaturgo los ha agrupado y zurcido con tal refinamiento pesimista, que el espectador asiste a ellos con más malestar que interés” (1). Bueno noted that López Pinillos’ pessimistic view of Spanish life, especially rural Spanish life, is nothing new, saying that the playwright’s distaste for rural life and his view about the vulgarity of its people was already visible in *La casta*, performed a little over one year before *El pantano*: “Ese aborrecimiento del vivir campesino no es nuevo en el Sr. López Pinillos. En «La casta» asoma ya, aunque no con la premeditada violencia que en «El

pantano»” (1). *El pantano*’s criticism was much more vicious than *La casta*, and his violent feeling toward the countryside in *El pantano* is probably not representative of real rural life:

En aquella obra, en mi sentir superior a la que se nos ha dado anoche es visible la ordinariez de los usos, la zafiedad del trato social. En la comedia que motiva esta crónica la hiel del escritor lo anega todo: costumbres y almas. No es la verdad media de la vida rural la que se nos revela, sino el temperamento de un escritor sistemáticamente pesimista. (1)

Whether or not López Pinillos paints an accurate picture of Andalusia or not, Bueno’s review brings to light the pessimistic way in which the playwright treats it and his anger and frustration toward it. By doing this, he is not merely trying to entertain his reader or spectator, but to raise awareness of social problems, especially the desperate situation in Andalusia and the need for land distribution, better education and acculturation, and to eradicate *caciquismo*.

Again, his early journalism shows his inclination toward this tendency toward representing the horrific, the violent, and the sordid. Many of López Pinillos’ newspaper articles describe typical scenes from local life, such as his reports from the Feria of Sevilla or of Easter Sunday in Madrid, or scenes from daily life or events in Madrid and Andalusia. These pictures of local life involve all social classes, but López Pinillos puts a special emphasis on the popular class. He writes about beautiful aspects of Spain, but he contrasts this beauty with negative aspects about the working class’ life. He does this with the purpose of calling attention to social problems, and as José-Carlos Mainer in *Literatura y pequeña burguesía* says, López Pinillos’ journalistic works were “intencionadas crónicas” (90).<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Picturesque aspects of his hometown of Sevilla are presented in his newspaper article “Desde Sevilla: La ciudad y la feria: De nuestro redactor Señor Pinillos,” printed in *El Globo* on April 21, 1903. In the article, he has just gotten off of the train from Madrid, and he begins to walk around. He lovingly describes the sights and sounds of Sevilla: women washing the patios, the clear sunlight, the calm, narrow streets, the cobblestones, the wrought-iron doors to the houses and their sunny patios, people shouting in the streets. The description is a perfect *cuadro ameno*. In spite of these beautiful images, the article also has a description of the workers that



Even though he describes the beautiful and the pleasant, López Pinillos has an acute awareness of the underlying economic problems afflicting the day-laborers of Andalusia.<sup>63</sup>

López Pinillos also writes about scenes in urban areas, especially Madrid, and he employs the grotesque and the sensational in his journalism, especially in his descriptions of crowds.<sup>64</sup>

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come from the countryside to the fair in which it is obvious that the workers' situation is not picture-perfect. He transcribes his conversation with one of them:

Y auguraba desdichas, calamidades terribles; la pérdida de las cosechas, la falta de trabajo... Legiones de braceros hambrientos acudirían a los Ayuntamientos pidiendo la limosna de un jornal, mientras las mujeres y los niños recorrían las campiñas buscando algunos yerbajos para llenar los pucheros vacíos. Los labradores humildes venderían las bestias, los aperos; los esclavos del jornal reventarían de miseria. (2)

<sup>63</sup> In the previously mentioned article "La muerte," when he goes to a wake that takes place in a small town in Andalusia, he describes the people who are visiting at the deceased's house. They seem like character types, as if from a *cuadro costumbrista*: curious boys peer into the windows of the house, old women are praying and chatting, and some people are criticizing that whoever dressed the body didn't put on his best clothes, but his work clothes. López Pinillos describes the workers that come in to visit the body: they are tanned and rugged, and their clothes are tattered yet mended with care. There is a lovely description of the happy sounds that are heard in the town and the surrounding countryside: "Suenan cantos en los corrales, en los campos próximos, y á cantar sabe el doblar hipócrita de las campanillas repicadoras. Los pájaros gorjean, las mujeres ríen sin querer, el sol brilla; la Naturaleza alegre y triunfadora impone su indiferencia ante la muerte, con fecundas promesas de crear..." (1). It is idyllic, except for when López Pinillos calls attention to the indifference that the rest of nature shows toward death and when he describes the poverty in which these people live.

<sup>64</sup> In "El desfile" (*El Globo* 22 Feb. 1903: 1), Pinillos and his fellow journalist friend are out and about near Madrid's Calle Alcalá at sunset. They are admiring the beautiful women and they are jealous of the old, ugly (but rich) men who go out with them. At first, it reads like a pleasant *cuadro costumbrista*:

Pasan rientes, coqueteando, cimbreado el talle, meciendo las caderas, marcadas por los ceñidos trajes. Pasan solicitando las miradas con hipocresía ó con descoco. Todas iguales, pensando lo mismo, procurando idéntica cosa... Visten uniformemente: trajes negros, las ancianas; las jóvenes, alegres trajes claros, predominando los colores vivos; los rojos de sangre, de púrpura, de cobre; los verdes pálidos, oscuros, bronceados; los azules intensos; los amarillos rabiosos. (1)

He continues, describing beautiful and luxurious cars, the noise, and the beautiful sky. But immediately afterward, as a juxtaposition, he describes the ugly old women who are selling the young women's services (the young women are prostitutes) and the ugly old men who want to buy their services. Pinillos and his friend are comforted by the fact that the beautiful women don't love the old men, but they are upset that they, who have youth, happiness, (and teeth), cannot afford them.

"Visita á los cementerios" (*El Globo* 2 Nov. 1902: 1) can be considered to be a *cuadro costumbrista* in that it depicts a typical scene in the Eastern Cemetery and the surrounding area of Madrid called Ventas on the Day of the Dead. It features typical local people from Madrid, such as young women (*chulas*), soldiers, old women, beggars, children, etc. The horrible and grotesque imagery evidences that he is disgusted by the lack of solemnity with which the occasion of the Day of the Dead is celebrated—it seems that they only go to the cemeteries to have fun—and he feels that this type of behavior is uncivilized. Women eat junk food in front of children's graves while pretending to act moved at the same time, the soldiers gawk at the *chulas*, blind people go from car to car begging, and crippled people sell flowers. On the road leading away from the cemetery,

Similar to his journalism, in his plays he expressed not only his love for Andalusia and the beauty of its landscape and customs, but he also showed that there was a dark side to this beauty. This happens especially in *El pantano*, but also in *La tierra*, where characters speak lovingly of beautiful Andalusia, but the images are tinged with melancholy and sometimes even the macabre to help the audience comprehend the magnitude of the plight of the people who suffer there because they are not among the powerful class.

In summation, López Pinillos and his social plays formed part of a greater panorama of the theater of his time in both Spain and Latin America. López Pinillos and his colleagues who shared his concern for the well-being of the working class were the product of the moment in which they lived and of an evolution of the treatment of the working class (and especially of rural people) in the theater.

The situation in rural Andalusia was of utmost importance for López Pinillos. His own life instilled in him an appreciation for the people of Andalusia, especially for the people

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ugly, hairy old women are selling snacks from stands, and someone is making a mentally retarded boy do tricks for money. It seems that everyone is taking advantage of the crowds in order to make money. There is only one group of people who is seriously mourning, but López Pinillos speaks of a group of *horteras* (women of bad taste) that make fun of them. This article by López Pinillos depicts misery and the cruelty of people who take advantage of others' suffering.

"Un asesinato," published in *El Globo* on February 17, 1903, is another *cuadro ameno* gone wrong. López Pinillos describes a *paseo* on the Paseo de Recoletos in Madrid on an exceptionally warm day for late winter. Everyone is outside: old people, soldiers, women, and children. The journalist zooms in on a street performer in front of a group of children. The children are beautiful: "Melenas áureas, negras, pardas; labios de grana; ojos de endrina; mejillas de rosa" (2). But the beauty of the day and of the children is starkly contrasted with the hideousness of the street performer: "el cuero pajizo de su cara, crece el rojo barbecho de la barba; sus ojos son grises y pequeños; violada su nariz, que se encorva buscando curiosamente la verde dentadura en la negra oquedad de la boca" (2). He is performing a trick with his dog (that is described as wise, intelligent, and noble): the dog is supposed to play dead, and on a cue from his owner, the dog is supposed to wake up. But the dog is tired and does not get up on cue. So the owner becomes furious and curses and hits the dog, and when the dog whines, he kicks it so hard that López Pinillos reports hearing a crunching sound, the dog stops moving, and blood starts coming out of its nose. The drunken dog owner drools and yells, and the kids laugh.

This scene contains both the horrific appearance of the man and his violent behavior. Even the description of his nose is violent (in the above description of the drunken man's nose as violated). This horrifying scene is made even more horrible by the fact that the beautiful children laugh at the drunk man who has just killed (or, as the title suggests, murdered) his dog. López Pinillos expresses his dismay at how children, though innocent, can become callous to violence, and he is appalled by the bum's abuse of his pet.

who work in agriculture, and an awareness of the problems affecting them, especially that of *caciquismo*, which even affected his own family.

He was a talented journalist who, through his work, forged connections with Madrid's intellectual elite of the Generation of 98. His journalistic career exposed him to current political events and kept him informed about politics, the economy, and local, national, and world events. This provided an endless source of material to incorporate into his novels, plays, and stories, and the constant contact with the literary elite of his time kept him up-to-date on literary and theatrical trends. His journalism was a place where he could express his opinions on Spanish society and politics, and to practice and develop his own particular aesthetic. His work experience would help to mold him into a mature playwright. Also, by working for Madrid's most widely-circulating newspapers, he was able to present his work to a large audience and as a result gain recognition for his name, which may have helped him garner success for his other literary endeavors. His journalism also shows how he was already using Naturalism, the *cuadro costumbrista*, and disturbing images to communicate his pessimism toward Spanish society and his political and social concerns to his readers, which he would use in his plays.

López Pinillos' tendencies from his journalism would persist in his drama and he would combine them with other fashions of the theater that appealed to his urban audiences' enjoyment (who may not have had much direct contact with rural Andalusia) that also allowed him to express his preoccupation with Spanish society and the class struggle, especially with regard to corruption in Andalusia and the exploitation of its farm workers and to show his audience that rural Spain is not an idyllic place, as perhaps they may have once thought.

## CHAPTER 3

### *EL PANTANO*, NATURALISM, AND THE DECADENCE OF THE BOURGEOISIE

*El pantano*, premiering May 16, 1913 in Madrid's Teatro Español, denounces *caciquismo*, a hot topic in the Spanish consciousness at the time the play was staged, as an antiquated practice that makes rural Andalusia into a backwards, festering swamp and keeps its people in a chokehold that makes it very difficult, if not impossible, to climb out. In this play López Pinillos' jaundiced and censorious outlook is supported by his grotesque aesthetic and his Naturalist tendency, especially its emphasis on environment and biological inheritance as that which determines characters' behavior. Landscape and tradition, a reminder of *costumbrismo*'s continuing influence on Naturalism, also play an important part in conveying the play's message. This play fits solidly into the Regenerationist movement, because of López Pinillos' advocacy for hard work, education, and culture, no matter what a person's social class, and also because he blames laziness and lack of initiative for the continuation of *caciquismo*. He proposes that in order to combat the barbaric and backwards behavior exhibited by both the poorer classes and the bourgeoisie, there must be a strong work ethic and modernization (especially by elevating cultural levels and by bettering education). While not a play about the class struggle, it is nonetheless important to López Pinillos' agenda of greater equality between social classes because there are a couple of allusions to the way that the bourgeois class looks down on the working class and because he makes a point of demonstrating that the lack of culture and education makes all of the people

there, especially the working class, into barbarians. In the end, *caciquismo* is detrimental to its inhabitants' well-being, no matter what their social class.

The play centers on a conflict among the members of a bourgeois family that lives in a small town in Andalusia and has lost its fortune. The mother of the family finds herself compelled to accept money from the local *cacique* to pay the mortgages on her lands and to maintain the family, and she becomes involved in a romantic relationship with him, even though her husband is still alive and lives with her and two of their three sons. The eldest son of the family is disgusted by this and wants his mother and siblings to turn to hard work to maintain themselves so that they may live a moral life, although it may cost them their leisurely lifestyle. Instead, they choose to stay as they are.

*El pantano* starred the famous actors José Tallaví as Juan and Julia Delgado Caro as doña Carmen. In the play, 33-year-old Juan has returned to his hometown in rural Spain after having worked in London for the past ten years to find that the town's *cacique* don Alejandro has become his family's protector by advising Juan's mother, doña Carmen, in defending the family's money and property. Don Juan, doña Carmen's husband and Juan's father, is not able to take care of his family because he has fallen ill, supposedly from ruining his health by going to America to make money for the family.

In Act II, one of the family's servants lets it slip that don Alejandro is giving doña Carmen not just guidance, but also money to maintain her orchards and olive groves and to make mortgage payments. He also mentions that the two are planning to get married after don Juan dies. Juan's younger brothers, Enrique and Arcadio, know about the marriage plans, but they do not know about the financial aid from Alejandro. Juan sits down with his mother to talk, and doña Carmen reveals that don Juan was a gambler and a womanizer who

lived far beyond his means. He had spent all of his money, plus Carmen's inheritance money. He had also beaten her and separated her from her family. To top it off, he made Carmen sign away the rest of her assets to him, and then he abandoned the family for America. He later reappeared after his absence, totally dissipated from his vices, and Carmen took him in again. Juan suggests that instead of turning to don Alejandro and his money, the family could leave the town to work as day laborers. That way, in spite of the intrinsic hardships of being *jornaleros*, they would be making an honest living. Carmen confesses that she has fallen in love with Alejandro and that she isn't just using him for his money. In spite of these revelations, Juan does not see his mother as a victim of her circumstances but insists that she is depraved because he still does not think that what don Juan did to the family justifies his mother's affair with Alejandro.

In Act III, Juan tries to convince the family to give its lands to Alejandro, to whom they now rightfully belong, because he is the one who has made payments on them, and to go with him to work in London. It seems as though Juan is about to convince his brother Enrique to go, but in the end, the whole family decides to stay put because they are afraid of hard work and they are content in their town. Juan can no longer stand being in his family's home. He feels as though he has become different from them and everyone else in the town, and he feels as though the house is suffocating him. He leaves immediately to return to London.

Decadence is an overarching theme in the play. It is present in all classes of characters, represented by their physical, mental, and moral degeneration. The decadence of the bourgeoisie is additionally represented by the references to the family's loss of wealth, and the brutalization of the poor is represented in the character named Ángel. All of the

abovementioned symbolizes the caducity of *caciquismo*. Omnipresent in the play are the themes of decay and stagnation; corruption and degradation; determinism and entrapment. They work together with the concepts of environment and biology. The characters are surrounded by brutality, moral and political corruption, and stagnation caused by resistance to change, and it affects them and makes them and their children, where applicable, physically, mentally, and morally degenerate. Throughout *El pantano*, the grotesque is present in the deformed, the degrading, the abnormal, and the disturbing. Mental deficiency and mental illness are aspects of the mentally abnormal; the animalistic is another way of showing deformity and degradation. All of these factors, plus passivity and lack of initiative (otherwise known as *abulia* to the Regenerationists and the Generation of 98) perpetuate the cycle of corruption and backwardness and help to keep the age-old practice of *caciquismo* in place. The townspeople seem doomed to repetition of the cycle, but the protagonist Juan shows that with much willpower, they may overcome what seems to be their predestination.

The Naturalists placed great importance on characters' surroundings as determining their behavior. Thus, the town in *El pantano* is a major driving force. López Pinillos sets up the town as a beautiful place, yet one that is marred by stagnation and corruption. The townspeople's resistance to progress is documented early on in Act I. In one instance, doña Carmen confirms that the town has not experienced much evolution when she expresses that she is happy that their town is safe from progress, and she laments the advance of modernization and the loss of the old ways of life: "Claro. Antes el mundo era mejor. Ahora... Tanta novedad, tanto progreso... ¿Para qué? Y aquí estamos seguros" (15). In the section on López Pinillos in his book *El teatro como instrumento político en España (1895-1914)*, modern literary critic Antonio Castellón mentions the town priest as an example of the

townspeople's resistance to change as well as its ignorance. He calls don Sebastián "el típico ejemplo de la estupidez inmovilista. Su concepción del mundo es limitada" (156), backing up this statement with a citation from *El pantano* where don Sebastián refers to London as a "pueblo de herejes, Babilonia corrompida" and asks "después de todo ¿para qué sirve la libertad?" (*El pantano*, qtd. in Castellón 156). This quote from the play also speaks about the presence within the town of ignorance and prejudice toward and mistrust of life in other (modernized) places. The town's *cacique*, don Alejandro, also expresses this sentiment. He makes it seem as though those who want to change the town's traditional way of life are the adversaries, and he insists that no one should criticize their established way of doing things:

[...]Cada uno tiene sus gustos y sus ambiciones y sus deseos; pero en el fondo todo es igual. Y á los bandoleros que predicán atrocidades contra lo que pensamos y lo que respetamos hace siglos, hay que combatirles furiosamente. Debemos escoger un camino y recorrerlo con fe en la ayuda de Dios. Y sin ofender, sin censurar, sin criticar. (15)

Arcadio, Juan's youngest brother, shares the others' fear of change and his disgust at outsiders' criticism of their customs: "(Gravemente.) Sí; todo lo establecido merece respeto. Criticar es destruir" (15). Arcadio says that criticizing the past destroys it; that destruction of established traditions is disrespectful.

The presence of landscape and tradition contribute to the idea of environment as a determining factor of characters' behavior.<sup>65</sup> In *El pantano*, characters speak lovingly of the beauty of their landscape, but in keeping with López Pinillos' style of oscillating between the beautiful and the horrible, the representation of the Andalusian countryside (and its traditions) is beautiful and picturesque, but it also has dark undertones.

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<sup>65</sup> It was also discussed in Chapter 2 how naturalism and *costumbrismo* are related because *costumbrismo* represents regional places with their people's daily customs and traditions and because environment is also important to naturalism, and thus the reason why landscape and traditions are important as a leftover of *costumbrismo*.



For example, in Act I, Juan has just come back from London to visit his hometown, and his mother asks him how he could leave a place that is this idyllic for so long. Here, doña Carmen speaks of the town and its surroundings as a charming and pleasant place:

¿No te enamora esta paz? Mira qué cielo, qué luz, qué alegría. El piano, los ruidos de la calle... Y nosotros aquí, tranquilos... con esta dicha... Se me ocurren unas cosas que no sé expresar... (*Conmovida.*) Unas cosas que me harían reír y llorar... y... qué sé yo. Pero Dios es muy bueno, Juan. ¡Muy bueno! Por grande que sea nuestra honradez, más merece. (14)

In the above passage, Carmen praises the countryside for its beauty and tranquility. As the dialogue continues, though, what she says next may be interpreted in a couple of different ways--one way as a positive description of the town, and the other way as something more ominous: “Este pueblo es como un pozo muy grande, muy grande, donde hubiese campos y donde entrara el sol” (15). She refers to it as a very large *pozo*—a well—, which, from the loving way that she uses this comparison, could give a sense of a nurturing, protected place that is also the source of the water of life. But this picturesqueness can quickly take on a darker meaning—one of stagnation and entrapment—if a well also connotes darkness, limitation, entrapment, and isolation from the rest of the world. Carmen seems to feel comforted by the well analogy; she says that the town is a well where there are fields and sunshine, but the spectator and the protagonist Juan, along with the priest, can see that although there may be room enough to move around in the well that Carmen describes, and though the surroundings may be beautiful, it is still a trap. Further denoting the theme of entrapment, on another occasion, the town’s priest, don Sebastián, when he tells Juan that he will come by and visit him so that he won’t get bored during his visit, calls the pueblo a jail: “aunque no sea más que para que no te aburras mucho en nuestra cárcel” (16). Although the priest says this line, it is clear from his other words and actions that he himself does not feel

that the town is a jail. Instead, the priests' words here express Juan's beliefs about the town, and they are also López Pinillos' voice coming through to further put forth the idea of the town as a place where nothing comes in (i.e., new people or new ideas) and from which no one escapes.

Early on in the play, López Pinillos shows that the town's resistance to progress is limiting and stifling. As Castellón observes: "En *El pantano* aparece un mundo corrompido por donde no ha pasado el aire de la evolución" (156); he also rather succinctly refers to it as "podrido" (157). And a contemporary of López Pinillos, theater critic Manuel Bueno, called the town a "basurero" in his review of *El pantano*'s premiere published on the front page of *El Heraldo de Madrid* on May 17, 1913 (1). So, instead of showing a glorious provincial idyll, sheltered from the hubbub of modern life, in *El pantano*, characters' idealization of their landscape and of their rural lifestyle, instead of arguing that modernization and change are bad, actually reinforces the idea of rural Andalusia as a place that needs them. A conservative spectator may understand don Alejandro's position of resistance to change, but he or she must also realize that because he is the town *cacique*, he enjoys a special position of power and the status quo is convenient for him. Clearly, don Alejandro has the most to lose if *caciquismo* is eliminated, and for this reason he says that those who want change are not doing so with a helpful intention but one of offending them and censuring their way of life. Also, the playwright turns around Arcadio's fear that criticizing their way of life will destroy it by implying that the unfair practices and corruption caused by *caciquismo* in rural Andalusian society can be destroyed by bringing them to light and that *caciquismo* must be criticized so that it may be destroyed.

In spite of his desire to criticize rural Andalusia and his desire to bring change and modernization there, López Pinillos has not forgotten his affection for Andalusia and its traditions, and he wants the spectator to know that he respects its traditions as beautiful cultural heritage which should be respected and preserved. Juan embodies this appreciation for tradition while desiring change and shows that the two are not contradictory. Although Juan may think that his town is backward, nevertheless, he loves its sunshine, the sounds of its birds' singing, and its beautiful traditions, such as the celebration of St. John's Day:

Enrique. (Fosco.) ¿Por qué dices que vivimos encerrados? Antes no odiabas al pueblo.

Juan. ¿Odiarlo? Si es uno de mis grandes cariños. Si supieras cuánto he pensado en él y cómo recordaba entre las nieblas de Londres nuestro sol de Agosto, las mañanitas de San Juan y el canturreo de nuestras cigarras... ¡Válgame santa poesía! (16)

As another example, a fish seller comes to the house at the beginning of Act III, representing the picturesque folk tradition of the traveling salesman. He sings his *pregón*, which is considered to be a form of folk art: “¡El Pescaero! ¡Escuchá, mujeres!... ¡Acudí, mujeres! ¡Sardinas, caballas, almejas, pescaíllas frescas!” (45), and a page later, he repeats his call in the distance (46). The fish seller symbolizes the presence of tradition and the adherence to doing things the old fashioned way in the town and in rural Andalusia. López Pinillos makes it clear through these two instances that while he may dislike and want to get rid of the age-old tradition of *caciquismo*, some traditions are worth saving. He is not trying to eradicate everything about the rural lifestyle.

Returning to the role played by the environment in *El pantano*, it corrupts the behavior—and the biology—of its inhabitants. Castellón remarks on their mediocrity: “viven con sus pequeñas mediocridades” (156). Again, the rusticity of his characters is the fault of their environment: “El autor se complace en evocar la rusticidad del habitante del campo,

fuertemente determinado por su medio” (Grard 36). It is the resistance to change and modernization that makes the townspeople of *El pantano* so backwards and ignorant.

The idea that instead of being a good, idyllic place, the countryside (and specifically the biological causes of behavior there) had become contaminated was present in the novels of some Spanish naturalist writers of the late nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century, especially among those of the Generation of 1898. José-Carlos Mainer explains:

Pero estos pequeñoburgueses ya no creen en la bondad ingénita de lo natural; prisioneros de su crisis moral, piensan que las fuentes biológicas del comportamiento están contaminadas: tal lo vemos en las novelas valencianas de Blasco Ibáñez o en las paradojas naturalistas de Emilia Pardo Bazán... (*Literatura y pequeña burguesía en España* 93)<sup>66</sup>

Being a younger contemporary of this generation, López Pinillos exhibits the same portrayal of the countryside in *El pantano*, where the backwards mentality of the rural people and their complacency toward *caciquismo* will contaminate their behavior and that of their children and in some cases also their bodies, even making them grotesque.

First, the town is a hotbed of moral corruption, and it makes everyone else there morally corrupt. The most obvious example is doña Carmen, in her affair with don Alejandro while she is still married to don Juan. Theater critic Manuel Bueno’s review is a scathing criticism of the mother’s shocking behavior and the family’s passivity toward it. Notable is the critic’s appall in describing the magnitude of the depravity portrayed in the play, saying that the family’s level of morality is the same as a pig’s, even calling the mother

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<sup>66</sup> As a side note, López Pinillos thought highly of Blasco Ibáñez as a writer. This is evidenced in his article “Sangre y arena” y “El espada”” (*Faro* 28 June 1908: 3) This is an article about how the author of a novel titled *El espada* accused Blasco Ibáñez of plagiarism in his famous *Sangre y arena*. Both are novels about bullfighting. López Pinillos completely disagrees with this accusation and praises Blasco’s abilities and talent in writing novels. The following excerpt, in addition to showing his admiration of Blasco, shows his sarcastic style: “Para sollamarse á su lumbre [de la gloria] hay que remontar cimas eminentes con alas de águila. Y si las del señor Blasco son de jilguero, las del señor Héctor son de mosquito” (3).

a nymphomaniac, and labeling her arrangement with the *cacique* as disgraceful

“abarraganamiento”:

El nivel moral que alcanzan aquellos seres viene a ser el del cerdo. El padre está enfermo de parálisis agitante, y la madre, aunque ya ha traspuesto las fronteras de la madurez, apenas ha logrado metodizar su ninfomanía. La prole, disrespetables bigardos lugareños, asiste sin protesta, y hasta con placer, al suplicio del padre y al abarraganamiento de la madre, espectáculo que tampoco asusta al cura del lugar, testigo constante de aquellas ignominias. (1)

Although the critic defends the father-character, don Juan is not free from blame or accusation by López Pinillos, who shows that he was given to drinking, gambling, and womanizing. He also beat Carmen, took her money, and abandoned the family. It is no wonder why she turns to Alejandro for both money and companionship. Both mother and father have engaged in immoral behavior, which will affect the biological inheritance of their children. Of course, they are not the only corrupt characters; obviously, the *cacique* don Alejandro is also morally corrupt—he is having an affair with a married woman—and he is definitely politically corrupt. And neither the children nor the priest do anything to stop the affair; their passivity condones it. Bueno, in his same article, reinforces that the family’s behavior is caused by the effect that the environment has on them:

La pitanza cómoda y la rutina han endurecido a aquellos seres, irreparablemente aclimatados en el estiércol. Un momento cree entrever el muchacho la salvación de su familia. La exhortación a la madre parece reavivar un rescoldo de dignidad en el alma de aquella mujer. Pero no. El egoísmo familiar es demasiado denso.

Las almas están demasiado encanalladas. Al fin, la madre hace causa común con el medio ambiente, con sus otros hijos, con toda la inveterada bellaquería en que ha vivido. (1)

Secondly, the stagnation and corruption in the rural environment makes those who live in it grotesque in their physical and mental abnormalities. They are weak and deformed (some of them even seem like animals), they are not very intelligent, and some of them have

mental illness. These abnormalities work together to show the pervasiveness of the damage and degeneration that *caciquismo* causes. Ángel is animalistic and stupid, and the minor characters don Sebastián, don Alejandro, and his daughter María Pepa are ignorant and dim-witted, Enrique and don Juan are both physically weak and mentally ill, and Arcadio is lazy. Grard notes how López Pinillos' caricaturesque physical depictions of his characters that focus on their physical deformities, *á la* Quevedo, indicate his contempt toward them: "Una de las características de la manera de López Pinillos estriba en su actitud respecto con sus protagonistas que parecen excitar su desprecio. Numerosos retratos, en efecto, rayan en caricaturas, mofándose el autor de la deformidad física de los personajes que crea, al igual que los clásicos" (36). In the case of *El pantano*, López Pinillos shows contempt for the ignorance that his rural characters represent.

Ángel, the animal tender and don Juan's caregiver, is an example of how the lack of modernization and social injustice makes those who live in the rural environment brutal and animalistic. His behavior and his physique have both become animal-like. The stage directions describe him thus: "Ángel es un labriego fuerte, de apariencia brutal. En sus ojillos de paquidermo hay un resplandor de estúpida fiereza. La espesura de barba, á pesar del reciente afeitado, le tiñe de azul el rostro" (17). The above description reduces (or degrades) him from human to animal, as he is compared to a pachyderm, or thick-skinned quadruped, such as the elephant, rhinoceros, or hippopotamus. The thick skin of the pachyderm symbolizes that he is tough, and the density of this same animal's skin perhaps even indicates that he is dense (as in stupid). The quote "hay un resplandor de estúpida fiereza" confirms this and adds that he is fierce. His thick stubble that gives his face a bluish tint connotes virility and strength. His brutality is confirmed when in Act II, Juan finds him

beating his infirmed father. Ángel is an example of rural working-class boorishness and a prime example of how López Pinillos points out the barbarism that can be found in the rural environment.

The author's treatment of Ángel brings a case for the equal treatment of the working class into the play. At first it may appear that López Pinillos does not fight for justice for the rural workers in *El pantano* because the play does not involve the class conflict directly—the major conflicts in it are between members of a family of the dominant class (the bourgeoisie), and the larger problems of land distribution and hunger are not addressed specifically nor are there any workers suffering from exploitation in this play. But there are certain moments in the play where he does; for example, when Juan expresses his feeling of superiority to the servants by referring to Ángel as an imbecile and a brute and insisting that he should not treat his father so casually, Ángel defends himself, making a case for treating the working class as equal to the bourgeoisie:

JUAN. Ese imbécil no cuida más á mi padre.

CARMEN. ¿Por qué?

JUAN. ¿Por qué? ¿No es un irracional? Que guarde bestias; pero que no cuide criaturas.

CARMEN. Otro será igual ó peor. Ángel lleva diez años en la casa. Es pariente de Alejandro... Y sobre todo, es bueno.

JUAN. No, no es bueno. Es un bruto y los brutos nunca son buenos. Si á ti te parece bien que trate á mi padre como á un igual, que se burle de sus miserias, que le llame tonto... (19)

Ángel claims to the audience that all people are equal and that the bourgeoisie should not look down on the poor: "Pues hombres somos todos. Y hombre fué Jesucristo. ¡Y á mí con orgullos... na!" (19). Furthermore, Ángel's behavior can be blamed on the lack of education especially rampant among the poor.

Going back to the discussion on environment and biological deterioration, don Alejandro, the *cacique* and villain of *El pantano*, is ugly, stupid, and ridiculous. Antonio Castellón's description of him as "hombre de mentalidad retrógrada y mezquina" and "hombre mediocre" (156) conveys his mediocrity and backwardness. López Pinillos has reduced him to the level of animal—a "magnificent pig"—in the stage directions: "es un magnífico gorrino, orgulloso de su cogullada, su tripa y su pestorejo. Tiene un bigotillo tricolor: blanco, gris y jalde; y una cabellera tan aborrascada y frondosa, que, cuando enarca las cejas, déjale sin frente" (8). Don Alejandro is compared to an animal in order to accentuate his ridiculous pride and his lack of intelligence. The unruliness of don Alejandro's moustache and toupee, contrasted with his pride in his appearance, is particularly comical. He is a fool because although he is rather unattractive (he is fat, his moustache is of three different colors, and his unkempt toupee swallows his entire forehead when he raises his eyebrows), and yet he thinks himself to be sexy. Making don Alejandro both ugly and laughable exacerbates the abhorrence produced in the spectator from knowing that this man is having sexual relations with Juan's mother, and hopefully from this, the spectator will become even more appalled by *caciquismo*. Hopefully, also by making him laughable, the spectator will see that there is no reason why this silly, stupid man should be in power, and that he should not be such a tough obstacle to remove.

Another example of dim-wittedness is Juan's fiancée, María Pepa, who is described as: "espigada, pelirrubia, es una señorita aldeana de cortos alcances que mira con timidez, trabaja en silencio, reza y se aburre sin saber que se aburre" (8). She represents the leisurely people of the rural bourgeoisie, a group which López Pinillos despises. Her lack of intelligence (she is so stupid that she doesn't even know that she is bored) comes not only



from the fact that her father, don Alejandro, is not very bright, but also because of the idleness of the brain caused by the boredom of small-town life. If she were to get a job—López Pinillos' Regenerationist solution—perhaps the hard work would make her brain sharper.

Don Sebastián, the priest, is physically deteriorated: he is an ugly, deformed person, as he has an odd skin tone, small eyes, and he drags his feet when he walks: “es un viejo lucio, de pingües carnes y color aborrachada. Viste unos hábitos remendados y verdosos. [...] Tiene los ojos chiquirritines cubiertos por gafas azules, empuña un formidable báculo y anda arrastrando los pies” (*El pantano* 10). López Pinillos does not like him very much because his attitude is one of fear of change and because he represents the clergy, also an age-old institution that held a disproportionate amount of power in Spain.

Don Juan is a pitiful, degraded character because he has become physically weak in addition to mentally weak, he is treated in a humiliating way, and little care is given to his basic hygiene. He is 54 years old, but he looks much older and has a frail physical constitution. The stage directions indicate: “parece un ochentón. Anda penosamente, con las piernas temblonas y encorvado el busto. Solo conserva algunos mechones de cabellos de un gris plomizo junto á las sienes y la nuca. Tiene las manos poco aseadas y la barba luenga y descuidadísima. Su gabán y sus pantalones son viejos y sucios” (17). He is lame, hunched over, and nearly bald. His clothes are dirty and worn, his hands are dirty, and his beard is disheveled. He has become totally dissipated. Furthermore, the descriptions his poor care of his clothing and poor hygienic practices further convey laziness, apathy, and decay.

He is also senile, as the following dialogue illustrates, when it seems that don Juan has forgotten that he has already drunk his coffee, and he asks for more:

D. JUAN. (*Llorando.*) Angel...bebido...café mío... ¡Angel!  
ROSARILLO. (*Desde el patio.*) ¡Mentira, rementira! Yo lo he visto. Se lo tomó el solo. ¿Pa qué sueltas embustes? ¡Di, embustero!  
JUAN. (*Asombrado.*) ¡Rosario! (*Hay una pausa.*) Pero, ¿qué dice esa imbécil?  
ANGEL. (*Confuso.*) Es que... ¿sabe usted, señorito?... Esto es con tó. ¡Ha criado unos estintos!... Quedrá más café y cáatelo ahí. (17)

Not only has don Juan become an imbecile, probably from his vices, but the way that his servants treat him is less than dignified, even cruel. Instead of understanding his senility, the servants mock him and treat him like he is an idiot. His degradation is also present in the form of loss of dignity because he is mistreated and humiliated by the servants. The violence of this act of abuse and mistreatment of don Juan is disturbing, and it is even more so that the rest of the family even defends it.

The children of the family suffer not only from the place where they live, but also because their parents' actions and way of being have affected them biologically. In *El pantano*, the protagonist's brothers have physical frailty as well as mental debility and defects in personal integrity.

Enrique looks weak. He is 28 years old, but he is pale, weak, and crippled. A defect in his personality is his cowardliness and harsh way of speaking: "es un hombre endeblucho y pálido, con el cabello de un intenso negror, el verbo duro y la mirada cobarde. Usa traje de pana gris remendado y sucio, y tócase con una gorra azul. Es cojo" (8). Like his father, his poor care of his clothing reminds the spectator of apathy and decay as well as the family's financial demise. He is also mentally ill. Enrique suffers from delusions and paranoia. While the family is eating lunch, Enrique has a nervous fit when he asks for bread and no one gives it to him. When doña Carmen gives him her bread because there is no more, he accuses her of giving him leftovers and he is distressed that this is the way that they treat an

invalid. He has delusions that he has an animal inside his body that comes up through his chest when it gets hungry:

ENRIQUE. (*Indiferente.*) Pan. [...] Pan. [...] (*Descompuesto, gritando.*)  
¡Pan! [...] ¡Pan! ¿Cómo voy á pedir el pan en la maldita casa?  
CARMEN. Enrique, ¿ya empezamos?  
[...]  
ENRIQUE. (*Encolerizándose al observar que Juan le contempla estupefacto.*) Aquí uno no es nadie. Estoy pidiendo pan hace media hora. ¡Pan! ¡Pan! ¡Pan! ¡Pan! [...]  
CARMEN. (*Con ironía.*) Paciencia, hijo de mi alma.  
ENRIQUE. (*Medio llorando.*) ¡Lárgate! ¡Lárgate! ¡Fuera!  
CARMEN. (*Con energía.*) Vaya, vaya, pamplinoso, toma pan. [...]  
ENRIQUE. Un pan riquísimo. ¡Sobras, como si yo fuese un perro!  
CARMEN. Pero si es mío, Enrique.  
ENRIQUE. (*Conteniendo las lágrimas.*) Bastante he comido ya. No quiero arruinarte. ¡El café! Pero si me pasa algo, ¡como me pase algo!...  
ARCADIO. Enrique...  
JUAN. Chiquillo...  
ENRIQUE. (*Incorporándose, después de volcar la taza de un manotón.*)  
¡Esto se hace aquí con un enfermo!  
JUAN. Pero muchacho...  
ENRIQUE. ¡Déjame!... Esto se hace aquí con un enfermo que pide pan!  
CARMEN. Mira, Enrique, no me impacientes.  
ENRIQUE. ¡Por un pedazo de pan!  
CARMEN. Enrique, no seas estúpido.  
ENRIQUE. ¡Si estoy mintiendo! ¡Si me quejo por gusto! (*Golpeándose el esternón.*) Aquí no hay nada; aquí no muerde nada. Y tú misma en vez de cuidarme... (*Rompe en sollozos, se va al patio y desaparece por la derecha.*)  
JUAN. (*Penosamente impresionado.*) ¿Qué tiene?  
CARMEN. Esa criatura...  
ARCADIO. Fenómenos nerviosos, ¿sabes? Su cabeza no rige.  
[...]  
CARMEN. Si no fuese por el animal... ¿No te lo ha dicho? Oh, pues es admirable. Cree que en su estómago vive un animal y dice que cuando el animal siente hambre se le sube por el pecho arriba...  
JUAN. (*Interrumpiéndola.*) ¡Pero entonces está loco! (10-11)

The grotesque furthers the impression that the rural environment has degraded and degenerated its inhabitants and further serves López Pinillos' criticism. Characters' physical and mental degeneration and deformation and, in the case of don Juan, the humiliating way

in which he is treated, can be a manifestation of the moral corruption of past generations of a family or in a place, as characters' environments and their parents' temperaments affect their behaviors and influence their fates.

We will now take a moment to point out that the grotesque is frightening, but that it often has an element of comicity in tension with the horror. First of all, López Pinillos often visualizes his characters with physical deformities, and in many of them, their ugliness has a comical element. An example mentioned above is the ridiculous appearance of the *cacique*. Secondly, López Pinillos also often makes his characters do things (or things are done to them) that are horrifying and undignified but that also cause a reaction of laughter or pleasure at the same time in the spectator. For example, Enrique's episode at the dinner table is disconcerting, but at the same time it is so fantastic that it is comic. This mixture of the horrible and the farcical is typical of López Pinillos' style ("Parmeno transforma a menudo en motivo de hilaridad lo que, lejos de ser cómico en sí, es más bien propio para provocar el horror" (Grard 38)), and the spectator is momentarily taken away from his absorption in the action of the play by his inability to resolve the tension between his reaction of horror in tandem with pleasure. This allows him to see the scene and to appreciate what it represents—the horrible situation in Andalusia—from a different perspective.

Amidst all of the grotesque descriptions of people, the beautiful co-exists with the ugly and the degraded, a characteristic of all of López Pinillos' writing. In *El pantano*, López Pinillos does not describe doña Carmen as ugly or deformed at all. Instead, she is described as beautiful in her age: "es una mujer todavía lozana y bella. Sus cincuenta años, frescos y rozagantes, apenas si han dejado al pasar sobre la endrina de la cabellera algunos hilos de plata" (7-8). He is also gentle in his treatment of Juan, describing him as elegant,

although severe and tired: “Tiene el rostro mustio y la frente severa. En la palabra y en el gesto revela un cansancio incipiente. Viste con elegancia” (8). Perhaps his severity and fatigue is because, unlike his siblings, he is a hard worker; perhaps it is because his family’s attitude is taking a toll on him. López Pinillos puts Juan through a difficult situation, but he does not hate him because he stands for what López Pinillos admires: a good work ethic and the initiative to improve himself. Although doña Carmen feeds the corruption of her town by doing nothing to stop her financial dependence upon don Alejandro or her extramarital relationship with him, López Pinillos does not hate her. Maybe the author lets Carmen off the hook because her actions are the product of her husband’s abusiveness, greed, and selfishness. Also, Carmen and Juan’s elegant appearance and relatively high intelligence help the spectator to appreciate the other characters’ deformity and mediocrity.

Juan’s youngest brother, Arcadio, has not escaped inheriting family traits, although he is affected to a lesser extent than Enrique. The 26-year-old Arcadio is “rubio, alto, desvaído, es un gansarón insignificante que tiene una gran idea de sus méritos” (8). His defect is that he thinks that he is smart, and yet he is completely useless to his family. He does nothing to protest his mother’s affair with don Alejandro, nor does he contribute to bettering the family’s finances. His laziness contributes to the *abulia* that helps to propagate *caciquismo* and prevents him from taking any action to stop his mother’s relationship with don Alejandro, nor does he want to leave the town with Juan to escape their stifling surroundings.

The genes in this family have become weakened and degenerate. The parents’ actions have contributed to their own moral decay (and in the case of don Juan, his own idiotization), and also to the physical weakness and defective personalities of their children. Enrique is mentally ill, and Arcadio is lazy due to the inheritance from their parents’ immoral

activities, and because of their father's mental decay. To a lesser degree, María Pepa also functions within the play to remind the spectator about suffering from inheritance. She has inherited her father's lack of intelligence, and she is devastated when Juan breaks off his long-term engagement to her because he is scandalized about her father's relationship with his mother. When this happens, don Sebastian laments in Act III: "Señor, ¿por qué han de caer sobre los hijos los pecados de los padres? Esa criatura está loca por ti; desde la infancia te quiere" (López Pinillos, *El pantano* 48). The priest's reaction indicates that María Pepa suffers and that possibly Juan suffers because of the breakup, too. However, the termination of their engagement also signifies Juan's ability to break his ties with the town and its oppressive practices, thereby demonstrating that he escapes his 'inheritance.'

This idea that the sins of the parents devolve onto subsequent generations reinforces a seemingly endless cycle of moral vice and explains the continuous propagation of political and economic corruption by *caciquismo*. Suffering the consequences for one's parents' sins or the consequences of the past is also present in other plays of the period. In Ibsen's *Ghosts*, for example, the son suffers from syphilis even though he did not live a promiscuous lifestyle. It was passed on to him somehow through his father, who contracted it from his various extramarital affairs. Although his mother initially denies her husband's past immoral actions, the past keeps surfacing in the form of the son's illness, which cannot remain hidden. Echegaray's *Mancha que limpia* rejects the notion of biological determinism. It features a young woman who is adopted by her wealthy aunt. Her father led a wild bohemian lifestyle, and so her aunt accuses her of various morally loose behaviors, when the one really committing them is her cousin, her aunt's daughter, who, if people really do inherit their parents' dispositions, should be an upstanding example of morality and discretion. Similarly

to both plays, *El pantano* shows the upper class as having fallen into moral decadence instead of showing them as the keepers of high moral standards, as in the plays of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. This feeds into the theme of decadence.

Especially in the last half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Spanish literature had insisted on the aristocracy as the “depositario de los valores humanos más superlativos” (García Pavón 41), and Romanticism and Realism had made especially the concepts of love and honor the domain of the aristocratic: “aristocratizan los más sublimes conceptos del amor y la honra” (40). In contrast, López Pinillos shows that this bourgeois family is flawed. The family in *El pantano* would rather pay their mortgage and maintain their orchards by living in a state of moral corruption (in the form of their mother’s involvement with the *cacique*) than to move away from the town to pay their bills with money earned honestly and morally by working. The family’s passivity condones the mother’s immorality; they have become too comfortable in their environment and their situation, and they prefer immorality to work. Don Juan’s suggestion that instead of relying on Alejandro, that Juan’s brothers and Carmen would be happier as uncultured *jornaleros* (agricultural day-laborers), in effect says that even though workers are uneducated, at least they make an honest living. By showing this bourgeois family as financial has-beens, and that its matriarch has fallen into immoral behavior and that its father has always been licentious, López Pinillos’ play disputes the literary prejudice that the higher class is the most noble in character and instead opens the floor for a closer look at other classes as conscionable and honorable. He has a way to go, though, before his later plays really scream for the equality of the working class, as in *La tierra*, but *El pantano* shows that he is on his way.

Realistic stage decoration was a trait of Naturalism, and since naturalist plays centered on family and daily life, they were often set in the bourgeois family living room. The scenery of *El pantano*, the dining room of the family's home, is symbolic of the family's degradation and decadence. The objects on the stage in *El pantano* both lend a realistic feel and contribute to the themes of the play. The large dining room, complete with its double doors and sunny patio, and the couple of luxurious pieces of furniture indicate elegance, but the family's diminishing wealth is made evident by the modesty of the furniture and artwork and by the aging furniture:

Es una habitación amplia y alegre. La invade el sol por cuatro puertas de dos hojas, que a través de sus cristales permiten ver casi todo el patio. En primer término, una puerta á la derecha y otra á la izquierda. Entre esta y el foro una máquina de coser y un vetusto reloj de caja resplandeciente. A la derecha, un aparador antiguo cargado de cristalería y loza, y en el rincón, un veladorcito que sostiene un monumental quinqué de bronce y dos alcarrazas con tapaderas de paja trenzada. En las paredes cromos baratos y reproducciones de Lengo. Los muebles son modestísimos. (7)

There are signs that the family has had money at some point in time, but now it is clear that the family is washed-up, or *venido a menos*. It is clinging to the remnants of its status and possessions although the money is clearly running out. This is reminiscent of the female protagonist and her family in Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard*, which is about the decadence of the property-owning class. She no longer has any money, but she spends it as if she has plenty, and she refuses to sell her family's precious cherry orchard to a former peasant, now wealthy, who wants to cut it down and build houses on it because she cannot let go of the memories she has of the orchard. She is clinging to a past epoch of privilege for the rich, but one of oppression for the poor. Like *The Cherry Orchard's* protagonist, doña Carmen does not want to give up her lands and have to work for a living. That is why she gets the town *cacique* to pay the mortgage on them. Both playwrights convey that clinging



to the past is futile and that change is inevitable (and even good for those who have been disadvantaged by the system that is passing from existence). Additionally, the loss of financial resources of *El pantano*'s protagonizing family is a symbol of its decaying uprightness and sense of virtue.

It appears as though the characters have no power over their fate. This determinism, typical of naturalism, may lead the spectator of the play to believe that doing anything to make rural Spain better is futile. But what if the characters have the strength and willpower to either escape from their situation or change it? In Act III, Juan's solution to his family's economic and moral problems is that the family leave the town and to work in order to support its members: "He dado con la única idea que puede resolver esta situación. (*Con entusiasmo.*) Trabajar todos juntos, fuera de este pantano que nos asfixiaría" (49). Juan tries to encourage his family to give its lands back to Alejandro and to go to London with him, but—although it seems as though he is almost able to convince Enrique to go with him—in the end, they all stay. The problem, offers don Sebastian, is Enrique's emotional imbalance and his brother Arcadio's laziness—defects inherited from their parents. Only Juan musters the ability to escape the environment. But the fact that Juan was almost able to convince Enrique to go with him, provides hope for the possibility to effect change in the rural south. This suggests that even someone who has mental problems is capable of trying to change his situation, provided that no one else holds him back.

The environment has a very strong hold on its inhabitants, as evidenced by when don Sebastián tells Juan that his family cannot leave the town with him, he says: "¡Señor, se han arraigado de tal modo en este suelo!" (*El pantano* 58). Their roots are deep and they hold the family there. It appears that Juan's choice to leave the town breaks the chains of

determinism and leaves room for the audience to believe that Juan's family's situation (and hence the problem of *caciquismo* and lack of education in rural Andalusia) *is* changeable with human effort. The family's laziness and apathy has made them choose to remain there; they need to overcome this in order to take control of their lives and make different choices, as Juan has. Juan has even been able to escape the town twice: the first time was when he left for London, and the second time occurs at the end of the play, when he leaves to return there.

Biological inheritance is a strong force that binds the characters to their damaging environment, but contrary to this, Juan, who supposedly has the same biological makeup as his brothers, *is* strong enough to overcome his behavioral and biological inclinations toward laziness, brutality, and ignorance. When his family refuses to leave the town with him, Juan realizes that now he is not like the rest of them; his long-term absence in London has somehow transformed him into something different. Don Sebastian says to Juan that now he has ideas that are different from his family's ideas and that they don't trust in Juan's plan to get them out of their financial dependence on don Alejandro: "Debes irte. Ya no eres como los de aquí. No, no te pareces á ellos. Otras ideas, otro modo de ver... Eres altivo pero no los condenes. [...] Le temen á la pobreza y desconfían de ti. [...]" (58). The environment has swallowed up Juan's family and they cannot leave (or don't want to) for fear of the unknown and for fear of trying. At the end of the play, Juan again reinforces the asphyxiating effect that the town has and how being away from it has changed him: "Se me cae encima la casa; no respiro bien: no conozco aquí á nadie. ¡Soy un forastero!" (58-59).

Naturalism's emphasis on the influence of the environment and biological inheritance as deterministic is a perfect setup for López Pinillos to express his disappointment and

frustration over what Andalusia has become under *caciquismo*, and supplementing this with grotesque and violent images makes the problem of *caciquismo* in rural Andalusia more palpable.

López Pinillos showed that rural Andalusia had become an unhealthy environment contaminated by *caciquismo* and that something needed to change. In effect, *caciquismo* has turned rural Spain into a stagnant, rotting, sinking swamp, and its people have become degenerate. *Caciquismo* degrades people, and the themes of decadence and degradation are found throughout *El pantano* in different manifestations, such as the degradation of humans into animals, physical decline, and victimization: the characters are victims of their surroundings and of the actions of past generations. The family has sunk into a state of moral degeneracy that even manifests itself physically in the characters' appearances and odd behaviors and mental deficiencies. The sad moral and physical state of the townspeople is a metaphor for the damage done when *caciques* have too much power and perform unethical practices.

The importance of characters' surroundings is conveyed also by the presence of landscape. Although the playwright's love for Andalusia's natural beauty comes out when he shows that it is a beautiful place, his worry also surfaces when he shows through his grotesque aesthetic that this beauty has become disfigured by *caciquismo*. The shock effect of the grotesque in what should be an idyllic setting produces an uneasy feeling which, in tension with their laughter-producing qualities, makes the spectator think more consciously about the real social problem being presented by the play.

Just like the concept of heredity and life cycle, López Pinillos shows *caciquismo* as cyclical in its preservation and propagation and that the cycle needs to be broken. Because

*caciquismo* begets political corruption, it also begets moral corruption, which in turn affects the behavior of everyone in the entire town and as a result, their biology as well.

Additionally, passivity and resistance to change help to continue its power and maintain the status quo. The family's passivity toward their mother's situation represents the willingness of many to turn a blind eye toward *caciquismo*.

Landscape and tradition are important aspects of *costumbrismo* in this play, but that is as far as López Pinillos goes. Whereas López Pinillos does express a tone of nostalgia for some past traditions and reverence for certain values, customs, and institutions, he also shows that keeping some things as they are will actually benefit the *caciques* because in the case of the *cacique* of *El pantano*, if nothing changes, he can keep his power and privilege. Don Alejandro urges the importance of maintaining the status quo under the guise that modernization and change will destroy their time-honored traditions, and the other characters in the play are convinced of this. In contrast, naturalist theater often points out the need to reject certain oppressive traditions, like Ibsen protested the oppressive roles given to women in *A Doll's House*. In *El pantano*, López Pinillos does not want to destroy all traditions; only the ones that hold the town back—the old and oppressive social and economic system of *caciquismo*.

Furthermore, whereas many *costumbrista* authors depict the bourgeois class as the destroyer of traditions, López Pinillos makes his bourgeois characters fear change and he instead makes the working class the leaders for modernization, as Juan is the bourgeois-turned-worker who gets out of the backwards environment and changes himself. In Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard*, the peasant-turned-wealthy businessman character is the force behind the transformation of the old orchard into a more modern and more useful

space. Similarly, in *El pantano*, Juan is the one who serves to point out the uselessness of the old ways of *caciquismo*. Additionally, typical of naturalist theater, López Pinillos transgresses bourgeois societal norms with doña Carmen's adulterous relationship that transgresses family values. This echoes López Pinillos' challenge to other structures—*caciquismo* and the role of the poor in bourgeois Spanish society.

Through his own willpower and his willingness to work, Juan has been able to break the hold that the rural environment and his biology have on him, even though his family has not been able. Juan is the master of his own destiny, even though naturalism tends toward pre-determining the fate of its characters. On the other hand, it seems that there is no way out for Juan's family: they appear to be the helpless victims of their forbears, their environment, and their own passivity. Either way, *El pantano* delivers the message that there is something horribly wrong in rural Andalusia—the culprit is *caciquismo* and *abulia*—and something must be done to change it so that even the weak might climb out of their rut.

Like a physician curing a patient—a favorite metaphor of the Naturalists and the Regenerationists—one must first observe the situation to find out what is causing the malady and then effect the cure. If the environment is what is poisoning the characters of *El pantano*, then one possible cure is to remove one's self from it. Juan represents those who have left rural Andalusia. But as the play also illustrates through Juan's family, this is only a solution for the few who have the willpower—and perhaps also the financial means. Clearly this is not a permanent solution and it will not work for everyone, and at any rate, the problem would still exist. The doctor must dig deeper into the wound to find the cause of the environment's problem—*caciquismo*—and remove it. It is a wake-up call to the audience that instead of hoping that the people suffering from *caciquismo* will simply leave Andalusia,

the conditions in rural Andalusia themselves need to be changed. A good work ethic, improvements in education, and the fostering of culture will help both the idle bourgeoisie and also the poor. This will in turn help to eradicate *caciquismo* because as the play shows, passivity and ignorance help to keep it alive. Hopefully, this way, people will not be so dependent upon the *caciques* for economic stability, they will no longer be needed, and then *caciquismo* will become eradicated.

## CHAPTER 4

### *ESCLAVITUD*, MELODRAMA, THE HONOR PLAY, AND THE EXPLOITATION OF THE *CACIQUE*'S EMPLOYEE

*El pantano* only scratches the surface of the national problem of *caciquismo*.

Simmering beneath this was the poverty, hunger, and unfair working conditions in which Spanish *jornaleros* lived and nefarious political goings-on in a rural Andalusia that desperately needed to change. In *Esclavitud* López Pinillos show its effects more deeply and more darkly. Whereas *El pantano* presented *caciquismo* as an outdated system that mires Andalusia and its people in a putrid swamp of backwardness and stagnation, *Esclavitud* probes into the oppression of the disadvantaged by the *caciques*. Here, López Pinillos manipulates the honor play and the grotesque through the lens of melodrama to portray the active struggle between *caciques* and their subjects. The play explores one particular family's issue of honor that symbolizes how the poor are subject to the cruelty of the *cacique*. All of this forces the spectator to realize that *caciquismo* constitutes an abuse of power that forces the poorer class into a humiliating state of inescapable servitude and that it must be stopped.

Polarization between good and evil characters, the expression of extreme emotions, and the presence of contrasts are traits of melodrama, and they create spectator alliances with the characters that represent good and fear or even contempt for those who represent evil. What the characters do and say, what other characters do and say to them and about them,

and their appearance aid in their characterization. In this particular play, López Pinillos assigns the evil role to the *cacique* don Antonio and the good role to the protagonists: the *cacique*'s victims—his employee don Pedro and the latter's daughter Julia—and to the hero Pedro Luís, Julia's brother. With melodrama, seeing the protagonists in anguish-ridden situations helps create spectators' sympathy toward them. The audience sees how much the good characters suffer and wishes for justice for them and it directs loathing toward the bad characters who make them suffer. Wanting to believe that he himself is also a good person, the spectator identifies with the 'good guys' because he pities the good person in the play who is suffering and the fact that good people are suffering. Weisler Anderson explains, quoting William Steele's *The Character of Melodrama: An Examination Through Dion Boucicault's "The Poor of New York"*: "We identify with his problem, believing ourselves to be good, and pity the situation of goodness beset by badness" (251-252). The spectator will want the hero to win, the victims to be avenged, and the evil characters to be punished. López Pinillos pushes the audience toward sympathizing with the victims of evil and evokes repulsion toward the characters that act malevolently toward the protagonists. If the protagonists commit harmful acts, it is for their own self-defense or because they have no other choice. López Pinillos' grotesque renderings of his characters whether through his unique way of describing their physical appearances or through the undignified things that they do or the humiliating things that happen to them further convey to the spectator which characters are good and which ones are evil and show the audience the victimization of the good characters or the fearsomeness of the bad characters.

The conflicts among characters in a melodrama represent the clash between the forces of good and evil in the real world, and the concretization of *who* represents good and who



represents evil makes the audience aware that this evil is real—that something terribly wrong is happening in the real world—, that specific people are responsible for it, and that it must be dealt with in order to change society. Peter Brooks writes in *The Melodramatic Imagination*: “The polarization of good and evil works toward revealing their presence and operation as real forces in the world. Their conflict suggests the need to recognize and confront evil, to combat and expel it, to purge the social order” (13). In the case of *Esclavitud*, there is a problem of injustice in the rural Andalusian world that is caused by the landowning class and the practices of *caciquismo*, and something must be done about it.

*Esclavitud* premiered November 28, 1918 at Madrid’s Teatro del Centro. It starred well-known actor Enrique Borrás as the *cacique* don Antonio Venegas and Carmen Muñoz as Julia, don Antonio’s servant. The setting is described as: “en cualquier pueblo de España” (5), but Act I reveals that don Antonio is from Écija, placing the action in or near the province of Sevilla. The scenery for Act I is the interior of don Antonio’s home, a rustic old mansion. Don Antonio’s wife Consolación and the servant girl Natividad are spying on the street from the front door, anxiously awaiting his return. Twenty-seven-year-old Julia is also present onstage. Don Antonio’s servant Sisí arrives and announces that the town has voted to keep don Antonio in power. Sisí brings in don Pedro, Julia’s father. His hands are tied. Through Sisí the spectator finds out that don Antonio’s “black guard,” or personal police, also tied up two herdsmen named Sacris and Caramechá to prevent the three of them from swaying the vote against don Antonio. It is revealed that years ago, don Antonio took the penniless don Pedro in and gave him a job as town secretary and as his personal administrator. At the end of the act, Pedro Luís, Julia’s brother and don Pedro’s son, shows up at the door after a ten-year absence working in Argentina.

When Act II begins, Pedro Luís, Julia, and don Pedro return from mass. Sacris tells Pedro Luís that the townspeople are saying that he has come back to town to kill don Antonio in order to defend his sister's honor. Pedro Luís confronts don Antonio about the rumor. Don Antonio neither confirms nor denies it. Julia denies the allegations of her sexual relationship with don Antonio to her father, but later confides to Pedro Luis that the rumors are true and that don Antonio had coerced her by threatening to make her father's life difficult if she refused. Pedro Luís challenges don Antonio to a duel, but tells his father that the duel is about don Antonio's tying him up—not because of Julia. Don Pedro defends the *cacique* and forbids Pedro Luís from dueling with him.

As Act III opens, it is night. Julia tells Consolación that she is planning on running away and that Pedro Luís has gone into hiding so that his father will not try to prevent him from having the duel. Meanwhile, don Antonio's men are looking for Pedro Luís to kill him. Julia asks that Consolación send someone to warn Pedro Luís that they are after him. Don Antonio must leave his house to go to the courthouse. Julia wants to talk to him, and he tells her to wait for him in his bedroom. Don Pedro enters the patio, drunk, criticizing Pedro Luís for wanting to fight with don Antonio. Julia tells him the truth about her relationship with don Antonio, explaining that he had even drugged her to have sex with him. Don Pedro vows to leave the town with them and that he will no longer be too proud to let his son support him. Pedro Luís sneaks into the house and tells his father that he is determined to kill don Antonio and asks him to lead him to where don Antonio is. Don Pedro says that don Antonio is in his bedroom sleeping, and Pedro Luís tells his father to bring him out. When don Pedro enters don Antonio's bedroom, he suddenly summons up the courage to defend his son and daughter. While Pedro Luís is still on the patio waiting for his father to bring the

*cacique* out, don Pedro enters the patio from the bedroom, terrified, holding a bloody knife in his hand. Pedro Luís is proud of his father. Don Pedro, however, is horrified at what has happened in the darkened bedroom. The victim was awake, it ran toward don Pedro, who instinctively held out his knife, and the victim was stabbed. The victim let out a horrible scream, looked at him questioningly, and immediately collapsed. They realize their tragic mistake when don Antonio comes walking in through the front door, having returned from the courthouse. Upon finding Pedro Luís there, don Antonio pulls out his revolver, but Pedro Luís shoots him first, killing him. The curtain closes on don Pedro and Pedro Luís bringing Julia out from the bedroom onto the patio, bloody from the stab wound. That she is still barely breathing brings them a fragile relief.

The villain of any melodrama is obviously bad, and López Pinillos makes it quite clear that the power-loving *cacique* don Antonio is indeed a villain. Don Antonio represents the real-life *caciques* of southern Spain and his interactions with his workers represent the *caciques*' relationships with their subjects. López Pinillos exploits him in order to criticize the unfair practice that is *caciquismo*, and Castellón links don Antonio to representing the “seudo justicia, orden tradicional, [y] seudo legalidad” of Restoration-era Spain—the “España negra” (166).

Don Antonio controls local politics by unethical means by using fear tactics and coercion, impeding the townspeople to have a fair vote. He also exploits the poor's labor by paying low wages and by trickery. His victims are young Julia, who works in his home, and her father, don Pedro. Don Antonio creates a relationship where don Pedro and Julia are both economically dependent on him, and he uses this to abuse don Pedro and to manipulate Julia

for sex. He does not evoke any sympathy from the spectator, and he is not designed to. Instead, he makes the audience fear and despise him and yearn for his undoing.

López Pinillos exhibits don Antonio's unethical nature through his means of maintaining power and the way that he exploits his workers. These in turn reveal his other qualities of fearsomeness and arrogance. In the very beginning of the play, his workers have just held a meeting to vote on whether or not they want him to stay in power. Sisí reports back to don Antonio's wife and house servants that the results of the vote were in favor of don Antonio:

SISÍ. ¡Ya está el gato en el agua! ¡Se remató!

CONSOLACIÓN. Pero ¿Cómo? ¡Cuenta!

SISÍ. (*Alegremente.*) Pues comiendo. Que se han acobardao al final, que algunos contrarios de los más testarúos nos han dao el voto, y que el amo ha quedao de amo, como siempre.

CONSOLACIÓN. De modo que de lo que decían...

SISÍ. Ni resollar siquiera. Sombrerazos por aquí y por allí, y “Dios le guarde, don Antonio” y “vaya usted con Dios, don Antonio”. (10-11)

This dialogue reveals that the townspeople regard don Antonio with fear. Sisí's words “se han acobardao” hint that not everyone wanted don Antonio to stay in power, but that they voted for him out of fear. Even the ones who might have voted against him show allegiance to him by waving their hats and shouting good wishes for him. This shows the coercion that the townspeople are under. Whatever the dynamic, it works for him, for as Sisí points out: “el amo ha quedao de amo, como siempre”—don Antonio *always* wins.

The continuation of Sisí's report also alludes to don Antonio's proclivity toward physical violence, whether from himself directly or from his bodyguards, to control would-be detractors and illuminates further why he is indeed a fearsome character:

SISÍ. Uno se atrevió a meter la pata, el cuñao de Caramechá, y yo no he visto en mi vida un gofetón más disformísimo que el que le atizó el amo. ¡Si pecho a pecho no se pué con él!

CONSOLACIÓN. Pero como no iban a buscarle pecho a pecho...  
SISÍ. Es que, a traición, no se pué con él tampoco. ¿No le vigilan pa defenderle Andrés el de la Borrega, que es un diablo, y el Rojillo, que sabe de traiciones más que Judas? No tenga usted cuidao y respire a su satisfacción. Después de esta somanta, agacharán las orejas los burros que las querían levantar, y chanfli. (*Esclavitud* 10-11)

His power is untouchable, and although people who oppose him exist, they will be crushed: “Y usted y ése, que se me ha vendido porque sabe que acabaré por aplastarle, han conspirado contra mí, han intentado sublevar al pueblo, me han azuzado a los matones, han pretendido acabar con mi poder...” (31-32). They may be harmed in a physical confrontation with don Antonio or his bodyguards, as described in the above passage, or don Antonio may hurt them in other ways by making their survival difficult. Don Antonio threatens one of his workers with this possibility: “Ya sabe usted lo que le espera al que no esté junto a mí: comida de viento y abrigo de palo” (30). Don Pedro expresses the relationship of dependence and coercion between workers and their *cacique*: “como sale de su bolsillo el dinero que nos permite vivir, para el mundo soy yo su deudor. ¿Y hay lucha posible en estas condiciones? ¿Voy a aceptar la pelea disponiendo él de un cañón para agredirme y no contando yo más que con mis puños para defender nuestro puchero...?” (16). Don Antonio has a disproportionate amount of resources at his disposal to defend his position of power. López Pinillos is not exaggerating—in real-life turn-of-the-century Spain, the “cannon” to which don Pedro refers would have been the physical force of bodyguards, the Civil Guard, and sometimes even the army besides his control over employment and therefore who worked and who starved. Also a true-to-life representation of the era, don Antonio may keep his power and exercise it because he knows that lack of organization and leadership would make any attempt at an uprising doomed to failure: “¡Como si pudiera

valerse esta piara, si no manejase yo el palo y la honda...! ¿Quién la iba a guiar? Sacris, el cabecilla, ¿no es un bruto? Y usted, su consejero, ¿dónde tiene la ciencia?” (31-32).

The above words insult his workers’ intelligence and civility and the disdainful tone in which he speaks them reinforces don Antonio’s arrogance and how he looks down upon them. Don Antonio also believes that he deserves to be the landowner and that he is meant to be powerful because he thinks that his faculties are superior to everyone else’s: “¡Yo soy el amo porque debo ser el amo! ¡Porque sé dirigir, porque sirvo para mandar!” (32).

Don Antonio is an exploiter. First, he exploits the labor of his subjects without paying them what their labor is worth. Like many large landowners, don Antonio kept wages down because of the surplus of landless people desperate for work. Don Pedro brings up this issue of economic exploitation: “No negarás que don Antonio—que es mi explotador, puesto que me entrega la quinta parte de lo que vale mi trabajo—, si se pagaran la fidelidad, la lealtad y el desinterés, me debería millones” (16). Secondly, he exploits the fact that his farm workers are powerless to rise up against him because of their lack of power and leadership so that he may retain his overlordship. Thirdly, he sexually exploits Julia by threatening to fire her father and to hurt him if she did not have sex with him.

Don Antonio is also a liar—he tricked don Pedro into owing him money. After don Pedro had already worked at his job at town hall for two years under the assumption that his salary was the same as the previous secretaries’, don Antonio informed him that in reality, during all of that time, he was really earning half of that amount. All of this is revealed in a conversation between don Pedro and Pedro Luís:

PEDRO LUÍS. Y don Antonio ¿es generoso contigo?

DON PEDRO. ¿Él? ¡Con nadie!

PEDRO LUÍS. Entonces ¿qué le habrá impulsado a prestarle a un hombre que nada tiene como tú?

DON PEDRO. (*Con asombro.*) ¿Que él me ha prestado?  
PEDRO LUÍS. Me ha dicho que más de cinco mil pesetas. ¿No es verdad?  
DON PEDRO. (*Sombriamente.*) Que se las debo es verdad. (*Con energía.*)  
Que me las haya prestado, no lo es. Yo me encargué de la Secretaría del Ayuntamiento seguro de que, como mis antecesores, cobraría cuatro mil pesetas, y las cobré más de dos años. Luego me dijo don Antonio que mi sueldo jamás había pasado de dos mil..., y me convirtió en su deudor. (59)

This dialogue shows that don Antonio is base enough to recur to trickery in order to trap don Pedro under his control and to hide his iniquitous deed by calling it a loan.

So far, don Antonio is like a tyrannical slave-master: all-powerful with total control over his workers. What is worse, he uses their dependence upon him to abuse them and keep them subservient to him. Don Antonio's behavior is complemented by his sinister physical appearance:

Don Antonio tiene una cara bestial de rasgos durísimos, abultados, pero no suavizados por la grasa, en la que se entreabren en acecho unos ojos crueles a los que nunca turbó el pavor. Es grueso, sin hobachonería, y su vientre rotundo mejor hace pensar en una formidable caldera que en una pesada carga. (25)

Don Antonio's appearance is formidable and the grotesque aids in conveying this. The grotesque is present in the combination of disparate elements that describe him: the combination of the human with both the animal (his beast-like face) and the inanimate (the comparison of his large belly with a cauldron). A cauldron is a bulky, heavy, durable object, and together with his beastlike face they detract from any sense of humanity in him. Indeed, he treats don Pedro, Julia, and his other employees inhumanely. The abnormality or deformity of his fatness, bulkiness, hardness of his features, and the salience of his belly are also grotesque, and all of the above, plus the look in his eyes of cruelty, fearlessness, and of being always vigilant add to the fear and repulsion that he produces in the spectator.

By this point in the play, the spectator should have worked up a healthy amount of fear, repulsion, and loathing toward don Antonio. This is how López Pinillos' characterization is meant to get the audience to feel toward his villain. With regard to the protagonists, López Pinillos portrays the benevolent characters so that the audience will pity them (and in some cases, as in the case of Pedro Luís) admire them and root for them to prevail against their enemy.

Melodrama involves contrasts, and in contrast to don Antonio's evilness, Julia and don Pedro are victimized and degraded, and in contrast to these two, Pedro Luís is brave and dignified. Enrique Díez Canedo affirms in his review of *Esclavitud* that Julia and don Pedro are indeed victims, even though they are protagonists of the play:

El título que lleva el drama parece elegir como héroes a las víctimas, al viejo Don Pedro, de alma en que late un oscuro sentimiento de honor que no han logrado disipar los vapores del vino, y a Julia, su hija, mancillada por el amo y sometida a él por sacrificio, temerosa de perturbar la vejez de su padre. (188)

Both Julia and don Pedro are don Antonio's victims, and Julia is even the victim of her own father's actions and way of being. They are both designed to evoke sympathy and pity from the audience.

Don Pedro's grotesque physical description in the stage directions present a man who is defeated in both body and spirit:

Don Pedro es un hombre de gran corpulencia, cuyo organismo está arruinado. En la amarillenta piel de su rostro las arrugas han dibujado una tela de araña. Tiene una boca grande, sin energía, y en sus ojos, que sólo resplandecen con la precaria animación del alcohol, apágase una mirada de vencido. (López Pinillos, *Esclavitud* 12)

Don Pedro's abnormal features (his yellowing skin, dull eyes, and noteworthy wrinkles) describe his state of physical decline and succumtion to the ravages of time. The comparison of his wrinkles with a spider web mixes the human with the animal and the



inanimate and also points to his agedness. It also adds an extra dimension of creepiness and repulsiveness to don Pedro, as do his distorted features (his big mouth and his corpulence), that also add to his overall ugliness. His ruined body, dull eyes (with their defeated look that is even being snuffed out), and energiless mouth all indicate that his energy has been all used up. The mention of alcohol as the only thing that gives a spark of vitality to his lifeless expression hints that perhaps his sorry physical shape is from dissipation and alcoholism. Don Pedro's features scream defeat, ruin, dissipation, and even failure. One can surmise that he has been trampled by life and its misfortunes, and so he has let himself go. Like a slave beaten into submission, he appears to have lost all of his will to fight against the ravages of time on his body, the temptations of alcohol, and against his oppressor. Spectator repulsion toward don Pedro is created, but also pity. Unlike don Antonio, don Pedro's repulsiveness creates pity instead of fear because his declining body makes him seem harmless. Don Pedro is a degraded, humiliated character, and his impotence will define him throughout the play.

Don Pedro's humiliation and degradation begins upon his very entrance into the action of the play early in Act I. The spectator first lays eyes on him with his hands tied, a position of helplessness and subdual. Don Antonio had ordered his guards to tie up don Pedro and two other workers, Sacris and Caramechá, in order to prohibit them from attending a workers' meeting where they were planning to sway the vote against keeping don Antonio in power. Thus, this action shows that don Pedro is powerless to do anything about don Antonio's tyranny, and it helps to foreshadow and define the role of failure and humiliation in his life. It also symbolizes everyone's powerlessness under *caciquismo*.

As pitiful and humiliated as don Pedro is at this stage, his flaw—pride—begins to come through. This, plus his poor physical health, will lead to his daughter's victimization and to his own downfall. Don Pedro's first reaction to being tied up is sarcastic:

DON PEDRO. (*Temblando de cólera.*) ¡Y yo merezco que me amarren como a un bandido...! [...]

JULIA. (*Llorando.*) ¡No me maltrates! ¡Si tú estás seguro de que esto me duele más que a ti!

DON PEDRO. ¡Claro! ¡Yo soy un hombre sin pundonor...!

JULIA. [...] (*Llorando.*) ¡Qué maldad tenerte así...! (13-14)

Nevertheless, his anger and embarrassment are perceptible through his sarcasm. His daughter's reaction is also telling in that she is also hurt by her father's humiliation, and it also tells of the abusive way that he treats her. Instead of being kind to her, he talks to her as if he thinks that she enjoys watching him suffer and he calls her an ingrate: “¡Eres una egoísta...! ¡Una hija sin corazón...! ¡Sí, muchas lágrimas! Pero te quedas ahí tan tranquila, viendo a tu padre martirizado, sin intentar aliviarle” (16). Of course, he wants her to alleviate his suffering with alcohol. To protect his pride, he denies that he has been subjugated by acting as if it is merely a practical joke and by insisting that he could untie himself if he really wanted to:

DON PEDRO. (*Con fiereza.*) [...] ¡Ha de cortarlo el que lo mandó poner...! ¡Y si se ha cometido un atropello, habrá que pedirme perdón! (*Recogiendo velas.*) Y si sólo se trata de una broma, que es lo probable, habrá que sufrir el día de mañana las que yo urda para acabar con vergüenza este asunto.

JULIA. ¡Como que es una infamia una broma así!

DON PEDRO. (*Sublevándose ante la idea de que le crea su hija humillado.*) ¿Por qué una infamia? ¿Qué sabes tú? ¿Soy, acaso, una señorita histérica para no poder soportar unos cordeles, que rompería si me diese la gana...? (14)

Again, his attitude shows his disrespect toward Julia. In the same scene, don Pedro even denies that don Antonio has power over him, insisting that he has power over the

*cacique*: “No es tan gorda la broma. Las he dado yo mucho mayores... y algo podría referir de esto el señor don Antonio Venegas, si se dignase mirar hacia atrás con la memoria. Pero no hay cuidado. No mirará. Ni le dirá a ningún nacido las brutalidades que le suelto yo cuando nadie nos oye” (14). He insists on this again in Act II: “Y aquí, sin que nadie lo sepa, el amo soy yo, porque domino al amo. ¡Yo! ¡Tu padre! ¡Esa es la realidad! El cerebro de esta casa y de este villorrio—¡que es una carroña con un grajo encima!—está delante de ti” (59).

He cannot stand for anyone to pity him:

*(Orgullosa.)* ¡No soy yo hombre al que se le pueda tener lástima...! Miedo, desprecio, odio, lo que elija el peor intencionado; pero lástima, no. Si aguanto lo que aguanto, es porque me sobra valor para aguantar y porque no quiero ni debo permitir que haya en esta casa una tragedia. (15)

Whenever anyone shows him sympathy he becomes angry and indignant, probably because their sympathy is proof of his impotence and proof that he is being severely mistreated. For example, in Act II Pedro Luís finds out about don Pedro’s indebtedness to don Antonio and about don Antonio tying him up and expresses his disgust, calling what was done to him robbery and humiliation: “Es decir, que te burla, que te roba y que, pareciéndole eso poco, se atreve a humillarte” (59).

By making less of the fact that he was tied up, by refusing sympathy, and by insisting that he has power over don Antonio, he is trying to appear to be strong in front of his daughter and son, and he is possibly trying to delude himself into thinking that he is not powerless. But the action of the play suggests much the opposite. After all, his employer did prevent don Pedro from plotting to get rid of him. And don Pedro is trapped in don Antonio’s service because he is now his debtor. And with the inadequate salary that don Antonio pays him, it is impossible to pay him back and be free to leave don Antonio’s house.

To top it off, don Antonio uses this situation to his advantage as a way to prevent don Pedro from leaving and taking Julia out of his lustful reach. Don Pedro must bear don Antonio's abuse because he depends on him for a job and a place to live. It is obvious that don Pedro has been downtrodden. He is even too weak to be able to avenge the violation of his daughter's honor and he is too mentally delicate to even be able to stand hearing about it, as exemplified in Pedro Luis' need to shelter him from finding out about it:

PEDRO LUÍS. Y la malicia, ¿deja en paz al padre?

SACRIS. Le deja en paz. El padre, su padre de usted, es un caballero y nadie le critica. Estando tan acabaillo como está, ¿qué se le va a exigir...? (53-54).

Don Antonio is not the only thing that has power over don Pedro: he is also dependent upon alcohol, and his denial of it makes him further martyrize Julia. For example, in Act I while don Pedro still has his hands tied, he obliges Julia to give him a drink of wine, but because she must administer the bottle to him, he reproaches her for insisting that he drink more and more:

JULIA. (*Ofreciéndole la botella.*) Toma el vino.

DON PEDRO. (*Sacudido por la ira.*) ¡Bébetelo tú! ¡Yo no admito atenciones de caridad!

JULIA. Pero...¿es que lo necesitas! ¿Vas a perjudicarte por mí?

DON PEDRO. (*Encontrando una salida gallarda.*) Lo que voy es a reventar si continuas fastidiándome...y beberé para que no continúes. ¡Sosténme la botella! [...]¡Basta...! ¿Me vas a obligar a tragármela toda...? ¿Soy un sumidero para beber y beber y beber? (17)

He also tries to cover up his alcoholism by accusing the servant girl Natividad of sneaking into his room and drinking all of his wine.

Don Pedro's pride forces him to deny that he has been humiliated by being tied up and that don Antonio controls him, it makes him cover up his dependence on alcohol, and it makes him mistreat Julia. Anyone can see through his defensive techniques that don Pedro is perturbed by all of this. Instead of giving him an air of dignity, don Pedro's reactions make

him even more pitiful. The following comment by don Pedro in the beginning of the play, while his hands were tied, while meant to deny his impotence, actually functions to rather accurately describe what he really is: “¿Es que soy yo un cualquiera, un borrachín, un cobarde, un miserable al que se insulta y se ultraja impunemente?” (15). The action of the play will prove that he is a coward, a drunk, and a miserable, pathetic person. And his acting rudely toward Julia, instead of making him look powerful, makes the spectator detest him and yet pity him because he is probably trying to make up for the power that he lacks over others. Don Pedro will pay for his abusive treatment of Julia, his alcoholism, his pride, and his cowardice because these are what will push Julia into sexual involvement with the *cacique* and will bring him much distress and dishonor.

His lack of showing love toward Julia is also a factor in forcing her into a relationship with don Antonio: “¡He vivido muy sola, papá! ¡No te acuso! Pero he vivido muy sola... ¡y soy muy cobarde!” (85).

His drinking also contributed to less-than-affectionate treatment of her, and it helped push her to become involved with don Antonio. This is revealed in Act III, when don Pedro realizes this:

¡Si ni siquiera fui blando con tu infancia...! ¿Recuerdas el día que te derribé de un empujón, porque había bebido brutalmente? [...] Yo no lo he olvidado, y aún te veo vacilar y caer, y aún oigo tu vocecita: “¡Ay, papá! ¡Y yo que venía a besarte!” Venía a besarme la niña, que no contaba en el mundo con nadie que la sostuviera... ¡y yo la derribé! (87-88)

The excruciating regret that he expresses softens the spectator’s aversion to him. When don Pedro finds out that Julia did not want to go to him for help for fear of ruining his relationship with don Antonio, upon whom they depended for don Pedro’s job, and for fear of wrecking his health, don Pedro suffers:

DON PEDRO. [...] ¿Por qué no acudiste a mí para que te defendiera?

JULIA. Y contra el amigo único que te quedaba ¿te iba yo a empujar? ¿No habías querido suicidarte por no resistir la miseria? ¿No vinimos aquí hambrientos y no me dijiste que el único refugio con que podíamos contar era la casa donde estamos...? Pues ¿cómo iba yo a privarte de tu único refugio?

DON PEDRO. ¡Ah, no, no! ¡Hay algo peor que la miseria!

JULIA. (*Con mansedumbre.*) Pero preferí callar, porque tuve miedo, y, por callar, he llegado a convertirme en una mala mujer. (*Conteniendo el llanto.*) ¡Yo no quería que lo abandonases todo y que pensaras otra vez en la muerte! (85-86)

Don Pedro, upon hearing his daughter confess to him about don Antonio, realizes that it is through his shortcomings that Julia was forced into a relationship with don Antonio and forced to suffer it in silence and he realizes just how wretched he is: “¡Porque yo no lo he sabido ganar conservando mi decoro; porque no he tenido voluntad; porque soy un miserable borracho al que se ultraja impunemente...! (*Ahogado por los sollozos.*) ¡Y cae mi infamia sobre mis hijos...!” (86).

Don Pedro’s appearance and behavior, especially his behavior toward Julia, are repulsive and horrifying. But despite his personal shortcomings, the audience will not fear or hate him; instead, it will pity him. The audience will find out over the course of the play that don Pedro is a pathetic puppet of a man. He is powerless to rise up against don Antonio’s abuse, not so much because the enemy is too strong as because his own flaws defeat him. Although he victimizes Julia, he is also a victim of don Antonio’s trickery and abuse, and of his own pride, alcoholism, cowardice, and failure. At the same time, he suffers humiliation because his boss is having sex with his daughter, an affront to his honor. The spectator pities don Pedro for being so humiliated, trapped, and enslaved, and his initial pridefulness and denial of his own humiliation and his own powerlessness, age, and weakness makes him even

more pitiable, as does his subsequent realization of his wretchedness that causes him such great emotional pain and anguish.

There are some remnants of Naturalism's determinism in *Esclavitud*, especially in the way that environment decides one's behavior and oftentimes his fate. And it helps the audience not to detest don Pedro so much. First of all, don Pedro can't help his alcoholism, as Pedro Luís hints that he turns to alcohol to numb the pain of stomaching don Antonio's abuse: "¡Si comprendo que aquí te fuerzan a beber las condiciones en que se desarrolla tu vida! Ya sé que tu existencia no es muy blanda" (58). The miserable situation that don Antonio puts him in drives him to drink, and his alcoholism results in his delicate health and makes him act abusively toward Julia. His abusive treatment of his daughter helps push her into don Antonio's arms. It is a destructive cycle where victimization begets more victimization and abuse begets more abuse: don Pedro is abused by don Antonio, and in turn, his being abused makes don Pedro make Julia into a victim. The spectator obviously pities Julia because she is innocent in all of this, and the spectator even pities don Pedro, in spite of his shortcomings. He may do the awful things that he does because his situation drives him to it—and this further results in taking even more of a toll on his body and vitality. He, too, is the victim of his extenuating circumstances.

The one who suffers the most from don Antonio's abusiveness and don Pedro's pride and personal shortcomings is Julia. She is coerced into a sexual relationship with don Antonio and she also suffers to see him abuse her father. She is also tormented by her father's alcoholism and his disrespectful treatment of her. And don Pedro's pride and deteriorating health force her to suffer don Antonio's sexual exploitation in silence in order to protect her father. She confides to her brother that she was coerced into a sexual

relationship with don Antonio because he threatened to fire their father, and she knew that his health is too delicate to have to start over and that he is too proud to resort to becoming a beggar:

JULIA. ¡No me creas peor de lo que soy! ¡Abusó de mí!

PEDRO LUIS. (*Demudado.*) ¿Qué dices?

JULIA. ¡Por nuestro padre! Porque yo no me rendía, le maltrataba, le esclavizaba...

PEDRO LUIS. (*Temblando.*) ¡Julia!

JULIA. (*Conteniendo los sollozos.*) Y él, viéndose tan perseguido, se pasaba las noches llorando como una criatura... ¡y diciéndome que tendríamos que pedir limosna! (*Llorando.*) ¡Nuestro padre pidiendo limosna, a su edad y con su orgullo...! ¡Pidiendo limosna porque no podía vivir junto a ese hombre, y porque, separado de ese hombre, que le colocó, no sabía cómo vivir...! Yo ¿hubiera tenido ánimos para tolerar que, por mi culpa, le despidiese e siguiera maltratándole...? Pero antes de que se me acabaran los ánimos, esa bestia feroz.... (*Abrazándole sacudida por los sollozos.*) ¡No, no es posible que te lo imagines, Pedro Luis! (67)

Her expression of pain and suffering throughout the play and the things that she must bear make the spectator pity her. While her appearance points to her victimization, she does not have a repulsive appearance (unlike her father). The stage directions describe her as “una muchacha carirredonda, gruesecita, con grandes ojos melados, inquietos y dulces. Se mueve con temerosa prudencia, como si estuviese bajo la presión de una amenaza, y se expresa con invencible timidez” (10). She is a sweet person, as also evidenced by her brother’s memory of her when she was a child and he was leaving for the Americas. Although she had been saving up for a long time in hopes that she could buy a vineyard when she grew up, she gave all of her coins to Pedro Luís in case he might need them on his trip. Pedro Luís also lets the spectator know that Julia has changed since he left: “Cuando me fui, salían de tu boca menos palabras que risas [...] y has cambiado de tal modo [...]” (65). She is no longer the happy youth that she once was. The audience pities her because she is a good person and she does not deserve such a sad lot in life.



In stark contrast with don Pedro's degradation and Julia's victimization, Pedro Luís is the hero, and he embodies noble and brave qualities. He is not afraid to stand up to the *cacique* and to demand that he respect him:

DON ANTONIO. [...] Y dígame pronto lo que desea de mí.

PEDRO LUIS. (*Con energía, mas sin perder la serenidad.*) Lo primero, que me hable de otra manera. Con respeto, porque tengo derecho a que me respete y resolución para mantener mi derecho.

DON ANTONIO. (*Visiblemente alterado.*) ¿Me quiere usted insultar?

PEDRO LUIS. ¿Porque me defiende? (56)

He is also brave enough to confront don Antonio about abusing his sister:

PEDRO LUÍS. (*Después de unos instantes de silencio.*) Soy enemigo de rodeos y voy a expresarme con una claridad absoluta.

DON ANTONIO. Así me expreso yo siempre.

PEDRO LUÍS. Pues escuche.

DON ANTONIO. Escucho.

PEDRO LUÍS. En el pueblo hay quien asegura que yo he venido a matarle a usted.

DON ANTONIO. (*Verdaderamente asombrado.*) ¡Atiza! (*Echándose a reír de pronto.*) ¿Y le ha preocupado esa barbaridad...? ¡Pero, hombre!

PEDRO LUÍS. (*Muy serio.*) No; esa barbaridad no me ha preocupado. Lo que me ha preocupado es su origen, porque aseguran que vengo a matarle los que afirman que no ha sabido usted respetar a mi hermana. (55)

In all of his confrontations with don Antonio, Pedro Luís never loses his calm and he stays in control of his emotions. He is superior to don Antonio in intelligence and rationality.

Upon Pedro Luis' entrance onto the stage, it is obvious that he is going to be the hero of the play, as the stage directions indicate:

Pedro Luis es uno de esos hombres a los que fortalece la pelea por la vida. Su figura es apuesta, y en su lozano rostro, grave y varonil, brillan unos ojos llenos de resolución y de audacia y se aprieta una boca voluntariosa, que debe de haber tragado mucha hiél. Viste con elegante soltura un traje oscuro de americana. (38)

In contrast with his father and sister, he is strong and handsome, even though it is clear that he has faced challenges. However, he has been made stronger by them and he is

sure of himself, unlike his sister, and bright-eyed and ready to forge ahead through life's challenges, unlike his father. Mariano de Paco de Moya reinforces in "El drama rural en España" that the contrast between the characters of *Esclavitud* leads the spectator to see the need for change: "Una idea de necesario cambio se expresa agudamente en la contraposición del brutal cacique, el sumiso don Pedro y el joven Pedro Luís" (158). Pedro Luís' independence and dignity help the spectator to appreciate the magnitude of don Pedro's (and Julia's) humiliation. The interactions between Pedro Luis and his father are also interesting because Pedro Luís' strength makes don Pedro realize his own vulnerability and helplessness, and his successes underscore don Pedro's failures. At the end of Act II, Pedro Luís tells his father that he has challenged don Antonio to a duel, telling him that it is to avenge don Pedro's being tied up (instead of to avenge Julia's honor), and don Pedro's disappointment in himself is masked behind anger at the insinuation that he is not strong enough to defend himself:

DON PEDRO. (*Con una excitación que poco a poco va haciéndole perder el dominio de sí mismo.*) ¡Es decir, que yo no sé defenderme, que yo no comprendo cuándo me insultan...! [...](*Con ira.*) Yo... ¡soy un trasto que ignora lo que es dignidad!

PEDRO LUÍS. (*Con energía.*) ¡No; pero necesitas que te defiendan!

DON PEDRO. (*Conteniendo el llanto.*) ¡Como un niño...! ¡Como un idiota...! (*En un grito.*) ¡Vete! (López Pinillos, *Esclavitud* 72)

Pedro Luís' description of his first job in the Americas, while highly entertaining and humorous, serves to differentiate him even more from his father. It also shows that although he is the hero of the play, he is not exempt from López Pinillos' grotesque treatment and he is not exempt from being humiliated: "Simbólicamente, su trabajo en América había sido análogo al de su padre...humillado diariamente para entretenimiento de los demás" (García

Antón 523). But unlike his father, Pedro Luís makes the most of his humiliation and learns from it; he gains strength from it:

PEDRO LUIS. [...] Verá usted cómo gané mis primeros cuartos en Buenos Aires. [...] Se trataba de una pantomima [en un circo...] Mi papel, el principal, era muy fácil. Yo, vestido maravillosamente con un pantalón cuyos fondillos llegaban al suelo y con un frac cuyos faldones no me cubrían ni la cintura, y rapado perfectamente, no tenía más que una obligación: entrar en la pista, sentarme frente a la puerta por donde salían los titiriteros y aguantar su gimnasia de manos y brazos, diciendo a todo que no. Verdaderamente fácil, como habrá notado usted.

DON ANTONIO. Pero ¿qué gimnasia hacían?

PEDRO LUIS. ¡Oh! Conmigo, la más vulgar. Primero se presentaba el director del circo, muy peripuesto, con su levita verde y sus bigotes engomados. "¿Qué hace usted aquí?" Y yo me encogía de hombros... "¿Quién le ha dado licencia para entrar aquí?" Y yo volvía a encogermelo. "¡Márchese!" Y entonces empezaba yo a recitar mi papel: "¡No!" "¿No?" "¡No!" "¿Que no se va usted?" "¡Que no!" Y esta resolución heroica valía un par de bofetadas del señor de la levita verde, que se retiraba con mucha dignidad. [...] Después del director, me acometía el barrista, que, para castigar mi insolencia, no se conformaba con darme dos moquetes y me daba cuatro, con profundo regocijo de la chiquillería. Pero, detrás del hombre de las barras, venía el hombre de los trapecios, que me obsequiaba con ocho; y detrás el contorsionista, que me atizaba diez; y detrás el malabarista, que jugaba con mi cabeza como con uno de sus pelotones, y luego me honraban los payasos, cuyas bofetadas parecían tiros, y, por fin, grande como un elefante y pesado como un hipopótamo, aparecía el hércules... ¡Y qué gritos de júbilo entonces, y qué carcajadas tan alegres! [...] Gracias a la pantomima, por primera vez, fui útil. Tolerando que me escarnecieran para hacer reír. [...] Y, admírese usted: aquella noche, recibiendo bofetadas, empecé a tener verdadera dignidad.

DON ANTONIO. (*Socarrón.*) Y... ¿siguió almacenando dignidad de ese modo?

PEDRO LUIS. Algunos días. (*Sonriendo.*) Pero, no se burle usted. Si reflexiona, no se burlará. No voy a descubrirle que una lección le conviene a todo el que es capaz de aprovecharla. Y como, además, aquéllas me habituaron a soportar el dolor, y como a este hábito le debí después, en el boxeo, muy bonitos triunfos, dígame si las lecciones del circo no me fueron provechosas. (López Pinillos, *Esclavitud* 44-47)

The strength of Pedro Luis' personal integrity is evidenced by the fact that he was able to take this humiliating experience in his job at the circus and turn it into a related career as a boxer, which is more dignified in that he gets to fight back and in that it makes more

money. This description of Pedro Luis' circus job (together with the physical description of Pedro Luís in the stage directions) indicates that he has known hard times, but that he retains his dignity. Pedro Luís escapes oppression and victimization first of all when he left the town to work in the Americas and secondly, when he turned his humiliating experience into one that benefited him. Few jobs are as humiliating as his job at the circus, where he received cruelty from everyone on the circus staff—even the clowns, who receive the most abuse of anyone else in a circus. In contrast to his father, the spectator's reaction is not one of pity or of repulsion toward Pedro Luís; it is one of respect for having gotten ahead and for having come out a stronger person.

Again, López Pinillos' tendency toward creating horror at the same time with glee is evidenced here. The way that he was beaten up by his job is horrifying, and it is even more so because the circus audience guffaws at his mistreatment. But it is so slapstick and so absurd that it makes the spectator of *Esclavitud* laugh, too. Pedro Luís' experience at the circus is an awful thing to happen to someone in real life, but López Pinillos turns it into something comic. The tension between these reactions provoked in the audience members by Pedro Luís' story causes them to take a step back from the action of the play to think about what is happening from a refreshed perspective.

The Regenerationist in López Pinillos surfaces in the importance placed upon work ethic through Pedro Luís. José-Carlos Mainer observes that the redeemers in both *El pantano* and *Esclavitud* have redeemed themselves through hard work: “Al igual que en *El pantano*, el redentor y *Deus ex machina* de la obra, en su ambiente de rutina y brutalidad, es un indiano que se ha redimido por el trabajo” (*Literatura y pequeña burguesía* 106-107). Mariano de Paco de Moya agrees that his work ethic as well as his personal dignity are two

of Pedro Luis' best traits: "Su valor supremo es la dignidad personal y se opone, con un sentido reformista, a la falsa vida de los 'señoritos españoles'" (158) because he embraced hard work instead of laziness. Because he has become economically independent from the *cacique*, he is no longer subject to his humiliation or oppression.

Pedro Luís' physical absence from the town reinforces the role of place and environment in conveying the play's message that *caciquismo* oppresses people. It is also a remembrance of naturalism. First of all, it is during his absence from the town that Pedro Luís becomes economically independent and develops his ability to overcome personal humiliation. Secondly, his proposal that Julia and don Pedro leave the town to go live with him in order to escape from their oppression and dependency further shows that the town is a place where people are dependent and humiliated. And because *caciquismo* reigns supreme in the town, it points the finger at *caciquismo* as the real source of their oppression.

Pedro Luis' role in the honor plot of *Esclavitud* further distinguishes him as hero and also functions to show the degradation and abuse of his family by the *cacique*. He is the avenger of his family's honor because he kills don Antonio, and his success in killing him underscores don Pedro's failure in trying to do so. Although Pedro Luís commits a violent act by shooting don Antonio and killing him, it does not make Pedro Luís evoke fear or hatred from the audience because it was in defense of his own life and it was justified by don Antonio's arrogance and by the fact that he was abusing his workers and Julia. Instead of making Pedro Luís into a bad guy, instead the audience feels vindicated by it and they admire him for doing it.

That *Esclavitud*'s structure follows that of the honor play brings to the audience's attention a number of issues on López Pinillos' agenda, namely, the abuse of the poor by the

rich and the equality of the working class to the bourgeoisie. It was already mentioned in Chapter 2 that López Pinillos and other early social playwrights used the honor play that dates back to the Golden Age as a way to present their dissident views of Spanish society and at times to even portray the class struggle. Joaquín Dicenta's *Juan José* (1895) is an excellent example.

In his book on twentieth century Spanish social theater, García Pavón explains that using the honor plot was a safer way to introduce new ideas about justice for the proletariat into the social theater than simply throwing propaganda into the audience's faces because this form was familiar to the bourgeois audience, thereby making the honor problem a less threatening metaphorization of the class problem: "...el entronque con los problemas de honra, de nuestro viejo teatro del XVII[, es f]órmula sabia desde el punto de vista demagógico, ya que resultaba aliciente muy importante el concretar las nuevas ideas proletarias con los ancestrales sentimientos del honor" (*El teatro social en España (1895-1962)* 58). This was true of *Juan José*, and Mainer comments that "El honor y, junto a él, el amor actúan como metáforas, dramatizaciones si se prefiere, de un problema más hondo que estalla en toda su crudeza en determinados momentos de la obra" (Mainer, *Literatura y pequeña burguesía* 95). It was also true of *Esclavitud*, for Enrique Díez-Canedo notes in his review of the play that the criticism of *caciquismo* and the exploitation by the landlord of his workers is visible beneath the honor plot:

Para que *Esclavitud*, drama en tres actos de don José López Pinillos, estrenado el lunes en el teatro del Centro, sea el drama del caciquismo, le falta todo un elemento: el del pueblo en lucha con su señor y amo. Don Antonio, el cacique, muere violentamente al final de la obra, pero no es el pueblo quien lo mata, como Fuenteovejuna al Comendador; con todo, si lo que parece más directo en su muerte es la venganza de un ultraje de índole privada, no por eso deja de existir la inducción emanada del resentimiento popular. (188)

According to Alix Ingber, in her paper titled “What is an Honor Play?” there are different types of honor at stake simultaneously within individual Golden Age honor comedies: “...the conjugal honor conflict rarely appears in isolation. Instead, it is part of -- and often subordinate to-- a much broader presentation of honor.” Likewise, three centuries later in *Esclavitud*, there are two parallel lines of action that are tied up with the theme of honor. One revolves around the issue of don Antonio having his bodyguards tie up don Pedro (along with Sacris and Caramechá) and the other is about the violation of Julia’s sexual honor. The interplay between the two conveys a message that is wider in scope. They parallel and reinforce each other to indicate deeper-lying problems. One of these is that the practice of *caciquismo* is abusive and it violates the poor’s dignity. It also conveys the working class’ powerlessness against the *cacique*.

First of all, the act of tying up don Pedro dishonors him because it makes him look weak in front of everyone. It degrades not only him but also the workers who were tied up with him. Don Pedro’s restricted physical position also symbolizes the compromising position *vis á vis* the *cacique* that don Pedro’s lack of money puts him in. It also shows their powerlessness—literally, their hands are tied, and they can do nothing against don Antonio.

Secondly, don Pedro is dishonored because with the second type of honor in question in the play, sexual honor, a man’s honor can be damaged if a woman for whom he is responsible (a daughter, sister, mother, or wife) is suspected to have extramarital relations. In this case, don Pedro’s honor is jeopardized because of his daughter’s relations with don Antonio. The violation of sexual honor in *Esclavitud* represents the violation of workers’ dignity in real-life Spain because the villain takes advantage of the position of power that his money has granted him in order to defile the economically disadvantaged characters, just as

the *caciques* in real life did the same to enslave and abuse the poor. The fact that it becomes Pedro Luís' task to avenge his father's and sister's honor reinforces don Pedro's and Julia's helplessness to defend themselves—and that of all workers against their *cacique*—, and this is caused by the state of dependency of workers on their landlords for their livelihood and their economic survival.

In the same manner as Joaquín Dicenta's *Juan José*, where the working-class protagonist avenges his honor upon his supervisor, López Pinillos was also promoting a more positive image of the worker as equal to the bourgeoisie in *Esclavitud* by making him the master of his own destiny as the avenger of his family's honor. It also shows that the working class has honor, which traditionally was thought of as a trait that only the upper classes had.<sup>67</sup> When Pedro Luis decides that he must kill don Antonio to avenge his sister's honor because otherwise he will not be able to live with himself emphasizes both his bravery and his sense of duty to family honor:

DON PEDRO. [...] ¿Cuándo nos vamos?

PEDRO LUIS. (*Con viveza.*) Pero, después de lo ocurrido, ¿sé yo siquiera si me podré ir? (*Reconviniéndole cariñosamente.*) ¿Me debo ir, padre? (*Con saña.*) Siendo mi hermana víctima, no de una calumnia, sino de un crimen, ¿he de alejarme pacíficamente de esta cueva?

DON PEDRO. (*Con pavor.*) ¿Qué quieres hacer?

PEDRO LUIS. (*Con fría resolución.*) Sustituir a la justicia. He condenado a ese bandido como un Tribunal... ¡y voy a matarle como un verdugo!

DON PEDRO. (*Horrorizado.*) ¡No, no!

PEDRO LUIS. ¡Le mataré, padre! ¡Como a un hombre o como a un perro! ¡Cara a cara, si no huye, o a traición, si pretende burlarme! ¡Yo no podría vivir si, por miedo a su poder, no peleara con esa bestia feroz! ¡No podría vivir! ¡Me ahogaría de asco! (93-94)

With this speech, Pedro Luís is also vesting himself with power; the same power and authority of a court of law.

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<sup>67</sup> Lope de Vega also permitted the working class characters to have honor and the power to avenge it when violated by the upper class, as in *Peribáñez*.



The play also makes the case that Julia, although she did have an affair with don Antonio, also has honor because her dishonor was not by choice. Don Antonio, as well as her circumstances, forced her into the affair. Julia explains to her father how the seduction happened:

DON PEDRO. [...] ¡Hubiese dado mi vida porque resistieras!

JULIA. Pero ¡si resistí, padre! ¡Si me domino a traición!

DON PEDRO. ¡Bandido!

JULIA. Primero rogué, supliqué, lloré...

DON PEDRO. ¡Bandido!

JULIA. Luego quise contenerle con amenazas; después, le huí... Y una noche, la del ultimo día de su santo, me hicieron tomar una mezcla de bebidas...

DON PEDRO. (*Abrazando a Julia, que llora nerviosamente.*) ¡Bandido, cobarde, bandido...! ¡Bajo su mismo techo...! ¡Abusando de su poder...!

¡Como si fuéramos bestias sin alma y no criaturas de Dios!

JULIA. ¡Porque necesitamos un pedazo de pan...! (85-86)

It turns out that don Antonio used alcohol to seduce her. Julia's and her father's dependent economic situation also forced her into it, as she was coerced by don Antonio's threats to hurt her father if she didn't. She is not a depraved woman.

The honor plot also serves to emphasize don Antonio's evil character. He is dishonest and abuses his power, and he treats Julia and don Pedro as animals, without rights or dignity, because they are poor. It also emphasizes the poor's defenselessness and dependence upon their landlords because of their poverty.

The final scene of don Pedro's botched attempt to defend his daughter's honor is a twist on the way that the honor play is supposed to end. The moment that don Antonio comes walking in through the front door of his house and don Pedro realizes that who he had really stabbed was Julia causes shock and horror not only to him, but also to the spectator. This scene is especially grotesque for its violence and near-tragic way that it ends. And because it makes his failure stand out. He will not be the one who successfully defends his

family's honor—when he finally decides to defend his children against don Antonio, his newfound courage backfires on him and causes even more tragedy. And his son must finish the job. This final action of don Pedro's is the pinnacle of his failure and humiliation and Julia's victimization. That he has finally overcome his cowardice, but that it ironically results in near disaster, is also both horrifying and shocking. This last scene is also especially melodramatic for the excruciating emotional distress that the characters express.

In summary, through the magic of melodrama, and through López Pinillos' grotesque aesthetic, the audience will feel and see that the oppressed working class portrayed in the play also deserves justice in the real world. López Pinillos' integration of real-life happenings into the action of the play, further this idea while lending greater realism to the play at the same time. It helps the spectator to see that what don Antonio represents—*caciquismo*—is the cause of the workers' suffering and that these horrific injustices really were happening in their own country, right under their noses because don Antonio's actions are representative of typical practices that really took place in Spain under *caciquismo* and they show how powerless his subjects were to get rid of him.<sup>68</sup>

Also true to real life, *Esclavitud* is about how their dependence upon having a good (i.e., subservient) relationship with the *cacique* to insure their basic needs prevented them from speaking up and left them powerless, and slavery and that which it connotes—cowardice, impotence, fear, and humiliation—are important themes explored in the play. Antonio Castellón confirms that Pinillos blames the existence of the *cacique* on the town's

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<sup>68</sup> First, the election process in *Esclavitud* reflects how the *cacique* (and even the Ministry of the Interior) frequently rigged elections, often by coercing those who wanted employment to vote as instructed. As in real-life Spain, in the play, it was not a free election—don Antonio stays in power because the workers are afraid of the consequences of voting against him. Secondly, the play alluded briefly to how protesting was not an easy solution for workers in Spain because of lack of organization and leadership and because the *caciques* had plenty of resources to quash rebellions.

cowardice: “Pinillos denuncia la existencia del cacique por la cobardía del pueblo” (164) because they chicken out of voting against him. Don Antonio is a scary and cruel man, and he takes advantage of their poverty, fear, and cowardice to keep them under control. Don Pedro has become trapped and enslaved in an inescapable position of dependence by his poverty and physical deterioration and by becoming don Antonio’s debtor, like an indentured servant who will never be able to buy his freedom, and he is also enslaved by alcohol. It becomes Pedro Luís’ task to avenge the acts that destroy his father’s dignity and honor, and the fact that he had come from outside the town reinforces the powerlessness that many workers in rural Andalusia felt to take matters into their own hands and don Pedro’s failure.

The grotesque has a very important part in this play and it also serves to reinforce the play’s major themes. It aids in the characterization of don Antonio as evil and don Pedro as pitiful, and it even gives comic relief as in Pedro Luís’ job description. It also serves the purpose of eliciting reaction from the audience. Don Pedro stands out as an especially grotesque and degraded<sup>69</sup> character. He is a dissipated, old alcoholic. He receives don Antonio’s injuries to his body, mind, and honor, but in reality his own worst enemy is himself. His disrespectful treatment is disconcerting to the audience and ironically it reveals his own victimization. It is don Pedro’s fault that Julia became involved with don Antonio and it is his fault that his daughter has lost her honor. His mistake of not showing Julia fatherly love pushed her into the arms of her seducer, and his pride for not wanting Pedro Luís to support them if they were to move away from the town to live with him kept him from leaving the very situation that would cause more damage to Julia. He cannot protect his

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<sup>69</sup> Mainer, in his essay “José López Pinillos en sus dramas rurales,” calls don Pedro a “militar degradado” (*Literatura y pequeña burguesía* 106).

own daughter from becoming dishonored and he can't even defend her honor because he is too weak and too cowardly.

That López Pinillos made the hero someone of the working class and the villain of the powerful class helps to make a claim for the equality of the lower classes with the upper classes and their right to be empowered. Pedro Luís embodies admirable traits that the heroes of any other kind of play (which typically featured high-class heroes) would embody. Pedro Luís' dignified behavior and sense of duty to honor show that he is equal to and even superior to the *cacique*. Julia's behavior under her circumstances shows that she, too, has honor and dignity.

López Pinillos makes it clear that both Julia and don Pedro, who represent the masses of poor and powerless people in Andalusia, are suffering and they need to be relieved of the oppression that comes with *caciquismo*. Pedro Luís symbolizes hope that those silenced and oppressed by *caciquismo* may one day stand up for themselves because his avengement of his sister's honor against don Antonio represents the farm workers' avenging their oppression by the landlord and his killing don Antonio symbolizes putting an end to *caciquismo*. Sometimes they may need a little help from someone from the outside, just as the long-absent Pedro Luis helped his father and sister, and just as the real working class people in Andalusia may need help from people very much like those who attended López Pinillos' theatrical performances. Much damage was done by *caciquismo*, but by removing it there is hope for repairing its damage in the future. All is not lost—Julia is still breathing, after all.

## CHAPTER 5

### *LA TIERRA*, MELODRAMA, AND THE PLIGHT OF THE ANDALUSIAN FARM WORKERS

Among López Pinillos' social plays, *La tierra* most passionately and bluntly presents the class conflict arising from the overwhelming problem of unjust land distribution and the resulting battle between classes in Andalusia. Pinillos confronts his audience in an up-close-and-personal way by dramatizing the failed struggle of a group of landless farm workers against their stingy landowner and his spoiled son.

As discussed in Chapter 4, melodrama presents situations of extreme emotions and contrasts with the goal of swaying the audience to sympathize with the heroes and resent the villains. And it gives its heroes noble personal qualities so that the spectator will side with him. López Pinillos places his protagonists in violent, grotesque, gut-wrenching situations so that the spectator will react with horror toward their predicament and thus to the actual subhuman treatment of all landless laborers in Andalusia. López Pinillos, like other writer-journalists of the day who wrote social literature, incorporated real situations and current events into his fiction to give it a greater impact and a sense of urgency so that the spectator will realize that the problems expounded upon in the play were also very current and real. He makes his protagonists suffer these problems so that the spectator will comprehend that they affect real people in their own country and that they deserve justice.

*La tierra* takes place in Andalusia, in the small fictitious town of Horbacho. Act I takes place on the town's main plaza, which contains a church, a shack, a tavern, and an old mansion that dominates the plaza. The setting is no accident—these buildings themselves denote class distinctions between the clergy, the poor, and the old aristocracy. When the play begins, the workers of don Diego's lands are already on strike, and it is soon revealed to the spectator that the workers on the neighboring farm have set that farm's fields on fire. The landowner's cruel son Ricardo appears and mocks their strike and the resulting exacerbation of their starvation. He offers one of the *braceros*, Zaratán, money in exchange for letting him cut off a piece of his ear, and then offers him even more money if he will allow him to throw rocks at him. Zaratán is tempted but refuses, due to the strike. José, an older worker, offers himself up for the 'job.' His daughter Caridad panics and tries to talk her father out of it, but José insists that he will not back out. As Ricardo is getting ready to cast the first stone, Rafael (José's son and Caridad's brother) appears onstage. They greet him with surprise, as he has been absent for a long time working in factories in Barcelona. There is a tense yet restrained confrontation between Rafael and Ricardo, and José is embarrassed about having offered himself up like a puppet for Ricardo's fun. Ricardo, in a rare burst of goodwill, gives José 100 *duros* as an apology.

Don Diego appears on the scene and tries to coerce his workers to end their strike by threatening to hire 100 workers from another town and to have his guards shoot anyone who tries to impede their work. He adds that even if they decide to end the strike and go back to work, he will not give them a raise.

In a conversation between Rafael and don Diego's bodyguards, it is revealed that Rafael has spent time as an agitator in Barcelona and Valencia. They warn him to leave

Horbacho, or they'll shoot him. When don Diego and his henchmen leave the stage, Rafael asks the workers what their goals for the strike are, and they reply that they want a raise in wages. Rafael insists that a raise will not fix anything in the long term, and that instead, they should demand land so that they might cultivate it among themselves communally. José convinces them that it is a better idea for each family to buy however much land that it can and to have everyone farm his own share. All of a sudden, at the end of the act, Caridad re-enters the stage to announce that her baby has just died from starvation.

Act II takes place in don Diego's dining room. A group of workers, including Caridad, her mother Ana, her husband Paco, Rafael, and Zaratán, with José as the group's spokesperson, are there to negotiate the terms of the strike by asking don Diego to give them a parcel of his unused, uncultivated land that they would pay for little by little. After his initial shock, don Diego asks if they are drunk or crazy, or both, and he asks the workers to step outside while he thinks it over. In their absence, he orders eighteen of his guards to stand guard on the plaza outside the house and on the balconies, and he plots with three other guards and his son to try to make it look like Rafael is attacking him to give them an excuse to apprehend him. The workers are called back into the dining room, and don Diego hands Rafael a note that he claims will incriminate him in the burning of the neighboring farm. As Rafael reaches out for the note, the guards seize him. In reaction, José grabs Ricardo and threatens to slit his throat unless the guards release Rafael and allow him to cross the plaza safely. As Rafael crosses the plaza, though, Ricardo orders the guards to shoot, and they do. Surprisingly, at the same time, Bautista, don Diego's guard who is secretly part of the workers' cause, shoots Ricardo. In angry retaliation, don Diego screams to all of his guards to shoot at all of the workers in the plaza. Shots are heard offstage.

Act III opens to a conversation between Zaratán and the town priest on the plaza, outside the church where they are hiding Bautista. It turns out that after the shootout in Act II, which resulted in six dead, three severely wounded, and fifteen lightly wounded, don Diego had left town but returned out of fear that the town would be destroyed by uprisings in his absence. Bautista had followed don Diego this whole time, debating on whether or not to kill him. Don Diego appears and sends for José, and in the meantime, the priest informs don Diego that Caridad's hand was severely injured in the shootout and had to be amputated. José shows up and tells don Diego that the whole town has decided to emigrate to America, where they have been promised free land with seeds and tools to cultivate it. An altercation between José and Diego ensues, with José accusing Diego of wounding and killing the workers in the shootout, for shooting Rafael, and for starving them. The workers gather in the plaza for their exodus, and José leads them and encourages them to go on despite their sadness about leaving. Diego threatens to have the authorities detain them at the port for deserting the country. José, in a fit of desperation and rage, stabs and kills don Diego in the same spot on the plaza where his son Rafael was shot. José shouts: "¡Hijo...libertá!" as the final curtain closes (158).

As previously discussed, exaggerations, extremes, and contrasts are integral features of melodrama, such as the contrast between good and evil as oppositional forces incarnated in the play's characters. In *La tierra*, López Pinillos assigns the heroic roles to his agricultural laborers and the evil roles to their landowners, and he accentuates the differences between their attitudes and behavior so that the audience will side with the workers and wish for their sad situation to be vindicated. Hopefully the spectators will desire justice not just for the *braceros* presented on the stage, but also for the ones in real life. López Pinillos'



physical descriptions of his characters—heroes, villains, and victims alike—are important to their characterization.

Don Diego and his son Ricardo are the villains of *La tierra*, and they both have physical features that accent their evilness, whereas the stage directions that describe the heroes, José and Rafael, bring out their noble qualities. Don Diego's salient features emphasize his severity: "Don Diego, varón corpulentísimo, tiene pronunciadas las facciones, duros y penetrantes los ojos y desapacible y autoritario el verbo" (*La tierra* 14). Don Diego is obese, but he is unlike don Alejandro of *El pantano*, whose portliness made him comical. Instead, he is more like don Antonio of *Esclavitud*, whose self-indulgent fatness makes him hardhearted, uncompromising, and unsympathetic. Don Diego's cruel actions and superior attitude toward the workers throughout the play speak for themselves, but the following lines reveal much about his attitude: "¡La tierra! ¡Que achique lo mío pa que sean algo los que no son ná! ¡Que ponga a mi nivel a los que están a la altura del suelo!" (94).

Ricardo, the secondary villain of *La tierra*, is a man whom Castellón calls "un hombre pervertido y brutal" (158). His physique is somehow less threatening than that of his father, although it still denotes arrogance: "Es un mozo muy satisfecho de sí mismo, que se contonea al andar, que mira como un gallo a las mujeres, y que, en sus relaciones con los campesinos, es tan confianzudo como el jifero con las reses que va a degollar. Luce un traje de seda cruda y no lleva corbata. Sin el bigote se le tomaría por un torero" (*La tierra* 27-28). In a staged production of *La tierra*, the audience will see that Ricardo is an arrogant rich boy. But upon a closer look at the written text, Pinillos puts forth an even more menacing image of the landowner's son in the phrase that describes Ricardo's informality with the *campesinos* as "como el jifero con las reses que va a degollar." López Pinillos' comparison

of the *campesinos* to livestock—whose destiny is to be slaughtered—speaks about how inhumanely the farm laborers in Andalusia were treated. The comparison of Ricardo to a slaughterer alludes that he looks upon his workers as no better than farm animals, and it foreshadows his cruel streak. This will be evidenced in his ‘games’ with the laborers in both the written and performed texts, which will especially push the spectator against him: “Para recargar bien las tintas contra el burgués, se hace referencia a que Ricardo, el hijo de don Diego, el amo de 40.000 fanegas, cultiva el deporte de pegar a los obreros si se dejan; o apedrearlos o sacarles trozos de oreja con una navaja” (García Pavón 87).

Both Ricardo’s and don Diego’s interactions with the *campesino* characters throughout the play will further define them as evil and make them truly loathable to the spectator. In great contrast to the villainous father-son duo, the corresponding father and son team of José and Rafael is noble and good, and their characterization promotes the audience’s identification with them.

José is the main protagonist of *La tierra* who emerges as the proletarian group’s leader. The opening stage directions of Act I speak volumes about what kind of character José will be: “es un viejo fortísimo y muy ágil, en cuyo rostro de bronce la reja del tiempo sólo ha conseguido abrir algunas arrugas. En sus ojos, de un brillo juvenil, arde el fuego de una energía inagotable. Su palabra escueta es comedida y gris su cabellera rigurosa” (López Pinillos, *La tierra* 10). He is old, but he is strong and vigorous for his age, and he is resilient. José shows his valiant character when he offers to have the landowner’s son Ricardo cast stones at him in lieu of at Zaratán:

RICARDO. ¿Y no habrá quien se atreva? ¡Diez pedrás a cinco duros!  
JOSÉ (*Con frialdad.*). Que importan cincuenta duros. Le cojo la palabra.  
CARIDAD (*Corriendo hacia él.*). ¿Usted, padre? ¡A usted que le ha de tirar!  
JOSÉ. No tengas miedo. *Sonriéndose.* Ha bebido mucho.

CARIDAD. ¡Que no, padre!

JOSÉ. Y que me liaré en vuestra manta, que es mu fuerte.

[....]

RICARDO (*A los campesinos, después de mirar, riéndose*

*despreciativamente, a Caridad y a José.*). ¿Nadie se atreve hoy?

JOSÉ (*Risueño.*). ¿No le he cogío a usté la palabra? Yo nunca hablo por hablar.

[...]

CARIDAD (*Llorando*). Padre...

JOSÉ (*Atajándola.*). No seas tonta, Caridá. He dicho que sí, y ni con las tripas en la mano diría que no (36-40)

He is willing to suffer for the good of the group, and he does it unbegrudgingly. José is a man of few words, but he means what he says, and his word is his promise and his honor.

What José does say is reasonable, and he always keeps his calm (unlike don Diego and Ricardo). He stands up for himself and his fellow workers in a dignified manner. When Ricardo belittles their current state of starvation and insinuates that the striking workers' hunger will become more exacerbated as the strike goes on ("¿Ya habláis de hambre? ...Mañana, sí: mañana empezareis a saber lo que es hambre" (30)), José speaks in such a way as to cover up his anger ("con una lentitud que encubre su cólera" (31)) and asks Ricardo: "Y eso, ¿está bien?" (31). He states the gravity of the workers' situation with calmness, matter-of-factness, and yet with passion: "Tenemos hambre todos. ¡Hasta los viejos que ya casi no puen comer, hasta los niños que maman, hasta las criaturas que todavía no han nació!" (30). When Ricardo accuses the workers of trying to cheat his father by asking for a raise, José defends himself and his comrades by explaining that they are not asking for more pay because of greed, they are asking because they need it: "Es que no pedimos por avaricia, sino por necesidá" (32).

In the especially tense scene where José must convince don Diego to give them some of his land, he stays calm, collected, and dignified although don Diego clearly has the upper

hand and in spite of his and Ricardo's condescending attitudes: when Diego asks what the workers want, José clearly states, without wavering: “(*sin una sombra de vacilación*): La tierra” (84). Although don Diego and Ricardo use intimidation, José shows his determination because he does not back down.

José remains grounded in reality when the workers are excited about demanding the land from don Diego, and he suggests a surprisingly capitalistic way of managing the land. First, Paco suggests that they all work the land in common and enjoy its benefits together. Critic Antonio Castellón comments: “En este momento parece que Pinillos tiene intención de adoptar una postura socialista” (158). In response to his son-in-law Paco's suggestion of a more Communistic type of living, José argues that some will work and others will take advantage of the labor of others and yet receive the same benefits as those who work: “Juntos los que trabajan y los que hacen como que trabajan? ¿Pá tós los que no sudarán tós?” (61). José comes up with the idea of purchasing the land from don Diego, dividing it up into private parcels, and each person pays for his own part, little by little: a more Reformist position. José suggests paying for the property because: “[...] es preciso pagar pá hundir los pies como amos...” (62). Knowing that the laborers want to pay their way instead of taking the land outright may help the bourgeois spectators to feel less threatened by the farm workers and to side with them instead of seeing them as a potential danger to their own property. And it shows that José is reasonable and willing to find a compromise, while don Diego and Ricardo are unreasonable and inflexible.

The secondary protagonist of *La tierra*, José's son Rafael, enters into the action of the play all of a sudden in Act I when he stops Ricardo from throwing stones at his father. Upon his entrance, he is described as “un hombre fornido, dueño de un rostro que no se altera

nunca y de unos ojos impenetrables que no pierden jamás la serenidad” (42). The phrase: “*dueño* de un rostro” (emphasis mine) and “que no pierden jamás la serenidad” means that he is the owner of his emotions; that he is always in control.

Like his father, Rafael remains calm and collected at all times. At the beginning of Act II, when the workers are waiting to speak with don Diego in his living room in order to demand that he sell them a part of the land, Rafael emphasizes to the others the importance of remaining calm, especially in light of the fact that they are all worked up emotionally with sadness and anger from the death of Caridad’s two month-old baby: “Calma. No te acalores, y usted, padre, reprímase, que aquí nos perderíamos si nos faltase la serenidá” (68).

He, like José, demands respect, regardless of his class, as evidenced in this dialogue where he addresses Ricardo using the informal second-person pronoun:

RAFAEL (Compitiendo en serenidad con su interlocutor.). ¿Contigo?  
RICARDO. ¡Ah! Pero, el ser lo que eres, ¿te da derecho a tutearme?  
RAFAEL. Como que, si no fuese por el caudal, sería más que tú, y tú me tuteas. (44-45)

Rafael is representative of the masses of Andalusian peasants who emigrated to the major industrial cities of Spain, such as Barcelona, in search of work. His clothing indicates that he has spent time in the city working: “Su traje de americana, que es como los que usan los obreros en las ciudades, está menos deslucido que su sombrerillo flexible y sus botas” (42). There, they were exposed to Anarchism and Syndicalism.

Rafael is an activist. In a confrontation between Rafael and the landowner’s son Ricardo, the spectator discovers that Rafael has been involved in some of the more militant strikes, and in a conversation with one of don Diego’s bodyguards, it is revealed that Rafael is responsible for inciting the crop burnings on the neighboring farm and for the current strike:

CURRO. ...La huelga, que se declaró hace tres semanas, a los pocos días de remanecer tú por estos andurriales, es obra de tu habilidá.

RAFAEL. (*Con una seriedad burlona.*) Se agradece el elogio, Veneno.

CURRO. (*Burlándose también.*) Pues me sale del corazón. Es obra tuya la huelga, como pué que haya sío obra tuya igualmente el fuego de hoy. Lo creo, y, como lo creo, lo declaro, porque a mí, gracias a Dios, no me duele elogiar a los enemigos. (52)

But he does not personally partake in extreme violence, as the following dialogue indicates:

RICARDO. ¿Y por qué serías más que yo? ¿Porque yo no fabrico bombas?

RAFAEL. Ahora, sería más que tú porque estás mintiendo, y yo no sé mentir.

RICARDO. (*Sin alterarse.*) De modo que... usted, ¿no tira bombas?

RAFAEL. (*Con entereza.*) Ni las fabrico. Y el que lo diga, miente. (44-45).

And he is not given to drinking—reading revolutionary propaganda and sharing it with his fellow workers is his only vice:

RAFAEL. [...] Acuértese de que me tomaron entre ojos porque, en vez de emborracharme, casi tó el jornal me lo gastaba en libros.

DON DIEGO. *Violentemente.* ¡En libros, no! ¡En libruchos que te servían pa sembrar la cizaña, pa convertir a hombres honraos en bandidos y pa dañar a los que tenían derecho a que los respetaras y los quisieras! (76-77)

Both heroes strongly contrast with the malefactors. José's and Rafael's calmness and maturity stand in relief to don Diego's and Ricardo's displays of anger, rage, and arrogance. Both heroes' tactics are of peaceful composure: they use only the non-violent means of negotiation and striking. In the end of the play, their exodus from the town was conducted in a peaceful manner, and the only reason that they left was because they did not receive the land that they had asked for, and they had no other choice but to go where they could obtain some land and thus a hope for a better future. Only in the very end of the play does José lose control and kill don Diego, but he does it because Diego threatens to stop their emigration—their only hope for survival—by arresting them. The characterization of José and Rafael in opposition to that of don Diego and Ricardo shows that members of the working class can be

dignified, intelligent, rational, and capable of leadership, and that they deserve respect and fairness from their unjust, irrational, and unreasonable landlords.

López Pinillos' characterization of José and Rafael in *La tierra* is reminiscent of his early journalism, where he also writes about workers' (and especially farm workers') valor, honesty, strength, and rationality. López Pinillos has always admired Andalusian *campesinos* for their resistance in hunger and poverty and their determination to get through hard times. He exalts the figure of the *jornalero* and portrays him using images of strength and productivity. In "Desde Sevilla: La ciudad y la feria: De nuestro redactor Señor Pinillos" (From *El Globo*, April 21, 1903) when he arrives at the Feria, he describes the country workers who have brought their animals to the feria as weathered, and tough, yet elegant: "...hombres membrudos, graves, ariscos, tristes... Todos ellos son iguales, andan con majestad, pisando recio; hablan pausadamente; las manos venosas, nervudas, grandes, son fuertes como el hierro de sus arados; los rostros, dorados por el sol implacable de los Agostos, envejecen prematuramente..." (2). In his article "La muerte," from *El Globo* on February 27, 1903, his descriptions of the old worker who died and the other workers that come in to visit the body describe them with images of endurance: "Los viejos labriegos, de rostros duros y curtidos, llegan envueltos en luengas capas pardas, antiguas, llenas de picaduras zurcidas, tejidas, por manos sabias y pacientes..." (1). He adds that the workers will persist in their efforts to make the land produce despite the constant threat of hunger and the land's resistance: "...contempla el cadáver un labriego joven, de puños de acero, que fecundará la tierra con su sudor caliente, haciéndola parir espigas de oro. Habrá pan; la madre anciana, las hermanas mocitas, vivirán como siempre. El caudal es el mismo; el hambre no trastornará la casa con la mirada ansiosa de sus ojos saltones" (1).

Reminiscent of José's compelling speeches to his landlord and to his fellow workers that are designed to move the audience is López Pinillos' article: "¡Y habló el pueblo!," from *El Globo* on June 23, 1903. This article describes a public debate that López Pinillos saw between a worker and some politicians. Although the worker featured in the article was confronting people with extensive training in rhetoric and who know how to use words for their purposes, he got his point across clearly and plainly and made a powerful argument for the *pueblo*: "Habló el tonelero, el hombre inculto, sin dobleces, sin presunciones, claramente, llanamente, sin estudiadas elegancias, rompiendo los moldes de la clásica etiqueta parlamentaria..." (1). He also shows his understanding of their persecution: "Habló el pueblo que trabaja y padece; el pueblo que se humilla é insulta; [...] el pueblo eternamente apaleado, pisoteado, adulado y temido...." and his solidarity with them: "Yo sentí que algo se removía en lo más hondo de mi pecho; yo pueblo, yo obrero, yo hombre que padece, recibí aquellas palabras rudas, ardientes, apenadas, como una lluvia benéfica apagadora de odios" (1). López Pinillos expresses this same hope for the working class' ability to stand up for themselves despite being at an educational disadvantage in *La tierra* with José and Rafael's ability to express themselves effectively.

Besides the exaggerations of the contrast between the heroes of the play and the villains, melodrama also contains exaggeration of emotions, and López Pinillos knew how to work it to effect the most reaction from his public. Renowned theater critic Enrique Díez-Canedo wrote that López Pinillos meant to entertain, move, and shake up his public with his extremes in *La tierra*: "La tierra es, ante todo, una obra de público. El señor López Pinillos tiene bien demostrado su talento en la escena, y una personalidad muy definida. Es el dramaturgo que sacude y conmueve por la violencia de la expresión, por el cálculo de las



situaciones extremadas, por la simplificación de los caracteres” (*Artículos de crítica teatral* 191). Sentimentalism, passion, and rage are plentiful in López Pinillos’ drama, especially in *La tierra*, and López Pinillos contributes to the exaggeration with his penchant for morbidity, exaggerated cruelty, and dramatic effect. García Pavón writes negatively of the play: “El drama resulta desaforado, sin el menor ahorro de patetismo ni truculencias” (García Pavón 89), but Enrique Díez-Canedo defends the sensationalism as part of melodrama: “López Pinillos era un verdadero hombre de teatro y sus obras muestran calidades nunca vulgares, aunque sobre todo sus dramas busquen la aquiescencia del público por caminos abiertamente melodramáticos” (“Panorama del teatro español” 27).

The exaggeration of emotion in melodrama helps to keep the audience interested and it helps them to identify with and sympathize with the characters’ plights. Weisler Anderson says that the melodramatic author will do anything to make the audience identify with and sympathize with his characters: “...the playwright uses every means at his disposal to enhance the spectator’s feelings for the characters and their situation. He must identify with them in order to feel more acutely sensitive to the plight of the hero and heroine” (Weisler 47). López Pinillos does not limit himself to gut-wrenching expressions of anguish; he also pours on passion and sentimentality through his characters. Both touching moments and sympathy-generating aspects help to create allegiances between audience members and certain characters.

In the more militant social plays of the twentieth century, passion and love for the proletarian cause is expressed by the worker-characters, with whom the author himself sympathizes and through whom he speaks. Through the heightened emotions expressed by his protagonists, López Pinillos pleads the case for justice for all rural workers in Andalusia.

Both José and Rafael act with dignity and composure at all times, and yet, they are human. José may remain stoic during his confrontations with the landowners, but he does have emotions: he suffers to see his daughter's anguish of losing her child, he laments having to leave his home, and he becomes angry and disgusted at times at their helpless situation. It is easy for the spectator to identify with them and to feel like they have emotions that are not so different from his own.

López Pinillos speaks out particularly through José and Rafael; for instance, when José accuses Ricardo of arrogance and hatefulness: “¡Pero, él, que, por odio y por soberbia, fue la causa de tó, está ya bueno y sano, y el mío, sin culpa, todavía padece en un hospital! [...] Y después de estas ferocidades, ¿me habla usted de afecto?” (128). López Pinillos points the blame directly at the landowners for the needless misery of the farm workers in Andalusia. When José describes his agony at the workers' starvation, the playwright is saying that there is no reason why farm workers should starve when there is plenty of vast and fertile land:

¡Morirse de hambre entre fanegas y fanegas de sembraura, donde se mece el trigo, y entre leguas y leguas de tierra sin labrar donde engordan los toros y la caza hierve!... ¿Es justo eso? ¿Es justo que no pasen hambre los hijos de las bestias y que la pasen los hijos de las criaturas?... Verdá es que hay algo peor que ser bestia: ¡ser jornalero! (24)

The playwright also uses Rafael to show the audience the reason why the peasants deserve to have some land when Rafael expresses his reasoning behind demanding land from don Diego (instead of a raise in wages). The workers have a right to the land because their primitive forefathers added value to it by building agricultural infrastructure and then they were cheated out of it and trapped into becoming landless day laborers when they fell into financial difficulty:

José. (*Trémulo.*) ¿La tierra? ¿Qué tierra? ¿Esta tierra, que no es de nosotros? Rafael. Que no es de nosotros; pero que debía ser de nosotros, porque lo fué. José. Si no conociera tu seriedad...

Rafael. (*Ardorosamente.*) Pero, ¿no cae usted, padre? Nuestros antepasados, los que vinieron aquí con el que ganó esto, y sus hijos, y los hijos de sus hijos, que lo disfrutaron como colonos, plantaron los árboles, levantaron las casas, abrieron las acequías y los pozos, hicieron los caminos... ¿Y qué pasó cuando, en la ruina los amos primitivos, y siendo ya esto lo que hoy es, lo explotaron otras personas?

José. ¡Sigue!

Paco. ¡Sigue!

(*Los jornaleros escuchan con ansiedad.*)

Rafael. Pues pasó que esas personas, que habían comprado esto de balde, le dijeron a los colonos: «¡Eh! ¡Que pagáis lo que pagábais cuando aquí no había ná!», como si tú no lo hubiesen puesto ellos, y que agregaron: «¡Amigos, que la tierra no vale lo que valía!», como si no hubieran sido ellos los que centuplicaron su valor. Y fué brutal la subida de la renta, y no hubo quien pagara..., ¡y el colono se convirtió en jornalero! (58-60)

Rafael's explanation also helps lend verisimilitude to the story and some 'objectivity' by 'documenting' how the situation of inequality came about.

Weisler argues that sentimentalism and sensationalism helped the audience to identify with and to pity the workers in the early social plays:

Pathos and tears typical of the early melodramas were also effectively used by the social dramatists who hoped to make audiences more sensitive to the misery of the lower classes. The tears and the anguished cries and gestures typical of melodramatic heroines in distress are used frequently...to emphasize the helplessness, the frustration and the despair caused by the villainy of the upper classes. (258)

This is not only true for the heroines, but also for the male protagonists, although Weisler insists that "In order for a melodrama to be successful, her [the heroine's] predicament must be designed to bring the audience to tears of pity for her situation (Weisler 40). José's daughter Caridad does precisely this. Caridad's expression of heart wrenching desperation throughout the play gets the audience's sympathy. In one particular scene, Caridad announces that her baby has just died of hunger: "(*Con rabia y dolor.*) ¡Nuestros

hijos se mueren ya de hambre! ¡De hambre acaba de morir el mío!” (64). This line not only expresses her own pain to the audience, but she also makes it known to them that the same thing is happening to others in Spain; that hunger is a widespread problem among landless workers and that they, too, are losing their children to it. She expresses even more agony and sadness over losing her child in the scene where her husband tries to convince her to accompany the group of workers to don Diego’s house to petition him for the land and Caridad wants to stay home so that she can be with her child’s body before its burial:

PACO. No. Te quiero tener a mi lado. Te conviene estar a mi lado.

CARIDAD. (*Conteniendo los sollozos.*) Pero, ¿y él? ¿Voy a dejar solito al alma mía porque se haya muerto?

ANA. Solo, no. Con tus cuñás. Y por diez minutos.

CARIDAD. Pero como se lo llevarán mañana pa siempre, diez minutos de verle valen por diez años. (66)

Act III is especially full of characters expressing their feelings about their inevitable emigration from the town in search of a better life in the Americas, and it is especially poetic and heartbreaking. Enrique Díez-Canedo confirms this (while at the same time commenting on López Pinillos’ proclivity toward changing quickly between the beautiful and the shocking): “...en las escenas del pueblo a punto de salir de la tierra en que nació, está, a nuestro modo de ver, la vacilación del arte de López Pinillos; abandona un momento su “manera” habitual, para seguir su aguda percepción poética” (*Artículos de crítica teatral* 192). Throughout their mass exodus, the characters express their love for their homeland and their patriotism for Spain and their pain of having to abandon it. This act contains beautiful and poetic descriptions of rural beauty, and the characters’ (and López Pinillos’) love for Andalusia comes through. But at the same time, these charming descriptions of the countryside are cast with melancholy and nostalgia; for example, when one of the worker women asks José if she can take her pet bird with her on the boat, and José answers yes, so

that the bird can sing to them on the boat to remind them of home: “[...] lo meteremos escondío en una canasta, pa que esté a nuestra vera; que así, cuando cante, nos parecerá que se entran en el barco el arroyo y los almendros del Molino [...]” (134). And Caridad describes how beautiful their land is as she laments how no matter how much of a better future they will have in America, it will never quite be the same as what they are leaving behind:

CARIDAD. [...] ¿Dónde habrá un cielo más azul que este cielo, y un aire más puro que este aire, y un agua más dulce que esta agua?... Y ya no volveremos a ver el cielo, ni a respirar el aire, ni a mirarnos en el agua.  
JOSÉ. Te mirarás en otra, que también está debajo de un cielo.  
CARIDAD. Pero no será el que vio una de niña y de novia, padre.  
JOSÉ. (*Con disgusto.*) ¿Romantiquismo?  
CARIDAD. Decir que no hay ná como lo nuestro, ¿es romantiquismo? ... Ayer, los escarabajos me parecían mariposas, y las ortigas, claveles, y los desconchones, bordaos.... ¡Figúrese usted lo que me parecerán los bordaos, los claveles y las mariposas de veras! (135-136).

It pulls at the spectators’ heartstrings and creates sympathy between spectator and protagonists to see them as they leave behind this exceptionally beautiful place. The sentiment of patriotism and love for Spain that the workers express makes it even clearer how much they do not want to leave, and their lamentation of their emigration draws attention to its unnecessaryness. Again, López Pinillos speaks to his audience through his protagonists to say that it is a shame that only certain people can afford to live in Spain, no matter how much they love it:

DON DIEGO. ¿Y, por odio [a mí], vais a padecer y a morir a miles de leguas de vuestra patria, en vez de gozar en ella de la vida? Pero, ¿ni a España queréis?  
JOSE. ¿A qué España se refiere: a la nuestra, que ayuna, o a la de usted y los suyos que come hasta hartarse? ...A la de ustedes, que es la que nos echa, porque, como nunca ha trabajado, ni el trabajo sabe estimar, no la queremos. ¡A la nuestra, sí! A la nuestra la queremos de tal modo, que lo primero que guardé en mi arquilla fue una almorzá de trigo y un costalejo de tierra. Y, donde Dios nos lleve, sembraré, grano a grano, ese trigo

español y lo abrigaré con esa tierra española... ¡y las espigas que nazcan serán españolas, y español será el pan que amasemos con su harina, y, llorando por España, nos lo llevaremos a la boca con el mismo respeto que si con él fuésemos a comulgar! (143-144)

The above quotation makes it clear that the workers love Spain, but they cannot stay there. It also tells the audience that while things may be good in their lives, there is another, darker reality for others in Spain. There is plenty of land and plenty to eat if the animals can live well, but it needs to be distributed among people: “¡Y qué miseria!... ¡Martirizándonos con ese látigo, nos han decidío a dejar un suelo donde se hartan las bestias a costa del hambre de las criaturas!” (139). Andalusia is beautiful, but only certain people can afford to live there.

True to López Pinillos’ style, the tear-jerking dialogue and the beautiful and melancholy images that the play presents become violent, gory, and even macabre images that involve the human body, especially blood. *La tierra* is rife with the grotesque and the violent. It is all part of the exaggeration inherent in melodrama, and it is part of the sensationalism so typical of López Pinillos. In fact, Antonio Castellón says that in López Pinillos’ rural dramas, social issues were a background against which he could write creepy stories: “el problema social: injusticia, explotación, incultura, cerrazón mental, miedo, ignorancia, conformismo, diferencia de clases (castas), le sirven de base para poner en pie espeluznantes historias donde planea la fatalidad trágica previamente traspasada por los determinismos sociales” (*El teatro como instrumento político en España (1895-1914)* 152). Although social issues were not merely a background—López Pinillos truly did highlight the need for reform—, this quote serves to emphasize that he was indeed known for his shocking images. Andrés Amorós writes in the prologue to his edition of López Pinillos’ novel *Las águilas* that López Pinillos’ *efectismo* can be quite strong, or: “casi chillón” (8). López

Pinillos was definitely effectivist. Ángel Valbuena Prat thinks that *La tierra* is a bad play because of its bad taste and its “truco demasiado burdo” (3: 192), (and he opines that *La tierra* is of much lesser quality than *Esclavitud*, which he thought was a “poderoso drama”) (3: 192). In any case, *La tierra* is certainly the most violent and disturbing of López Pinillos’ social plays.

At the beginning of Act II, Caridad makes reference to the death of her baby that occurred at the very end of Act I: “¡Qué dolor! ¡Morirse de hambre, como si se hubiese perdido en un desierto, cuando yo, que lo apretaba contra mi corazón, le hubiese alimentado con las últimas gotas de mi sangre!” (*La tierra* 67). Another bloody reference is made in Act III, in a confrontation between José and don Diego:

DON DIEGO. Quisiera tratar contigo pacíficamente. Más aún: afectuosamente.

JOSÉ. ¿Afectuosamente? ¡La sangre que se tragó este suelo saltaría de él pa ponerme el color de la vergüenza en la cara! ¿Afecto entre nosotros, sin que me devuelva lo que me ha robao? ¡Devuélvame la mano de mi Caridá! (127)

José refers to the Rafael’s blood and to the blood of the others who were killed and wounded in the shootout in the plaza from Act II. It also makes reference to another gory event that provides for a number of horrific and macabre references in *La tierra*: the amputation of Caridad’s hand. In the above quotation, José not only refers to the hand but demands that don Diego return it to him, an absurd request, but one full of emotion.

The theme of Caridad’s lost hand resurges when the workers are exiting Horbacho. José’s bittersweet ruminations are very poetic in the way that they personify different objects from his farming life:

Pues cuando paso por el Oterillo, y por la Rambla y por la Hondoná, me parece que salen de la tierra y que toman cuerpo humano los miles de días que trabajé allí, y miles de hombres—uno por cá día—con las cabezas de sol y los

pies de sombra, se empeñan en que me entierre allí, como a ellos los enterré.  
Y cuando corro por el camino, me hablan los árboles y las zarzas me tiran de la ropa. (138)

The poetic quickly becomes grotesque and macabre:

Y, cuando llego al cementerio, la mano que perdió mi hija y que coloqué sobre el ataúd de mi nieto, se me aparece en el aire, y revolotea hacia mí, igual que una paloma, como si me quisiera sujetar. (138)

And the imagery in José's monologue becomes even more horrific: "Si ya sé que son figuraciones mías. Son figuraciones, y si no se halla la mano, como cuando la sepulté, sobre la cajita del niño, será porque habrá roto las tablas pa meterse dentro y acariciarle" (139).

These violent and bloody images of a severed hand caressing a deceased baby serve to make the spectator react with horror to what is happening to the workers.

Violent acts definitely add to the excitement of the play, as melodrama involves exaggeration. The violence also adds to the feeling of horror produced in the spectator, which makes him feel sorry for the worker-protagonists who are suffering. The most violent actions of *La tierra* are at the end of Act II when negotiations at don Diego's house break down and result in some near-stabbings and a shootout at the end of Act III. The most climactic act of violence occurs at the very end of the play, when don Diego's workers are exiting Horbacho *en masse* to walk to the coast for their embarkation to America. After begging them to stay, don Diego threatens José that he will have the authorities arrest the group at the port and bring them back to Horbacho for emigrating illegally. José throws himself at don Diego and stabs him to death in a fit of rage.

The above violent acts were performed onstage, but there are other violent events that are referred to in the play. In Act II, when don Diego is speaking privately with Rafael in his dining room, it is revealed that in the past, don Diego had one of his men apprehend Rafael



and sew him up inside a mule's carcass and release hungry dogs onto him to punish him for reading subversive literature to the rest of the workers. Rafael's description of what happened is rather gory:

Entre otras cosas, podría contar el Montañés lo que hizo pa quitarme la afición a la lectura, que a usted, por lo que veo, se le ha olvidao. A mí no se me ha olvidao. A mí no se me olvidará que me cogió a traición, porque estaba dormío; que, con estas manos amarrás, me embutió en el vientre de un mulo muerto, al que había descabezao pa que mi cabeza sustituyera a la del pobre bicho; que cosió la piel, dejando unos cachos de carne, que todavía sangraban, junto a mi cuello..., y que soltó a unos mastines que desde el día anterior aullaban de hambre, pa que despedazaran la carroña. Una dentellá en la garganta del lector..., y el lector no volvería a leer. (*La tierra* 77)

This violent act was meant to silence Rafael from sharing revolutionary ideas with others, but it failed. Another gruesome image follows this one, when Ricardo asks what happened to El Montañés, the man who had done the above atrocity to Rafael. It appears that one of Rafael's friends avenged him by gutting El Montañés and hanging him from a tree: "Pero, ¿qué fin tuvo aquel hombre? ¿No lo encontraron, a las cuarenta y ocho horas, colgao de una encina y abierto en canal salvajemente?" (78). Both are horrifying and violent acts.

More exaggerated and horror-provoking images abound in the physical descriptions of the minor characters, both those who represent the 'good' side and those who represent the 'bad' side. The grotesque is employed to show characters that are evil, or in the case of those who represent the good side, to show their wretched condition.

Don Diego's henchmen's physical descriptions are exaggerated. Curro Veneno, Polilla, and Bautista, look mean: "Veneno, que es un hastial duro de rostro, con la mirada aviesa y la sonrisa cruel..." (13). Polilla, another bodyguard, also looks extremely tough and almost inhuman (note the comparison of him with a bear and a cork tree): "Polilla, guarda también, es una bestia taciturna con más pelos que un oso y más dureza que un alcornoque"

(47). If Bautista, don Diego's other bodyguard, seems less menacing than the others, it is because he ends up being an ally to the oppressed farm workers. He is friendly in spite of his brutish appearance: "Bautista, subordinado de Veneno, y que viste como él, es un muchachote simpático, a pesar de su cara de pocos amigos y de su adusto verbo" (47).

Zaratán is a minor character; he is a poor farm worker who is treated especially cruelly by Ricardo and don Diego. Don Diego is always talking down to him (calling him "pobre imbécil"), and Ricardo has the custom of cutting off small pieces of Zaratán's ears and throwing rocks at him in exchange for money. The stage directions describe Zaratán as:

En su cara inexpresiva, estrecha de frente y recia de quijadas, brillan, con toda la astucia con que pueden brillar, unos ojuelos de jabalí, y sus labios, a los que se aplica el índice en demanda de silencio, adelántanse con toda la elocuencia de gesto posible en una personalidad tan distinguida. Calza alpargatas, se sujeta con un cordel unos pantalones destrozados, con los cuales compite una blusa calandrajosa, y completa su atavío un sombrero, en cuya cinta proclaman el refinamiento de los gustos zaratánicos dos o tres palillos de dientes. (13)

Zaratán provides some comic relief in the play (the author also seems to laugh at him in the above). He is reminiscent of the picaresque, in that he is astute enough to do whatever it takes to try to get ahead in life, but he ends up still impoverished and trampled by life. It is comical but also pitiful that his clothes are held up by only a cord and that he is graceful in spite of his clumsily put together clothes.

There is another minor character whose appearance is disgusting and horrible, la tía Sarmiento, an old beggar woman: "La tía Sarmiento, una mendiga que se apoya en un báculo y que encórvase bajo un fardel lleno de mendrugos, acecinada por la edad, no destila más agua que la que brota de sus ojillos pitañosos" (18). She only makes a couple of brief appearances in the play, but they are enough to display the wretchedness and unhygienic

conditions in which the poor live and to add to the spectators' feeling of horror and uneasiness. Both she and Zaratán illustrate the poverty of the workers.

In contrast with the ugly characters in the above, Caridad and Ana are beautiful, even though they are also poor. Caridad is described thus: "Caridad es una mujer quebrada de color, que tiene unos labios muy pálidos, unas ojeras muy cárdenas y unos ojos muy brillantes. Viste un traje de percal limpísimo" (21). She only has unattractive under-eye circles and facial discoloration because of hunger and poverty, which is causing her bad health and worry. Her mother, Ana "La Buena Moza," is beautiful in her maturity: "La Buena Moza, cuya vejez conserva restos de hermosura, tiene el gesto provocador y audaz la mirada. En la pobreza con que viste hay aseo" (21). They are important protagonists of the play, like José and Rafael, who are not described as ugly or deformed, either. Through his non-grotesque protagonists, López Pinillos expresses a sympathy toward the brave workers, and through his grotesque working-class characters, he expresses his horror at the messed-up situation in southern Spain.

López Pinillos' exaggeration of emotions and of the horrible helps the spectator to feel how unjust life is for agricultural workers living in Andalusia. But that is not the only way that he fights for justice for these people in his social plays; he mixes in reality with his fiction in *La tierra*. He presents real problems that really were affecting Andalusian peasants that were caused by landlessness, and he makes references to current political events. Both not only lend greater realism and credibility to *La tierra*'s argument, but they also make the spectator see that the problems, although presented by means of fictitious characters, are very real and really are happening all around them.

Rural unrest had spiked during the period in which both *Esclavitud* and *La tierra* were written and produced. The situations that López Pinillos presents in *La tierra* were spot on with real-life events in Spain and Andalusia of that time, especially since it premiered on January 29, 1921, at the end of the Trienio Bolchevique. The Trienio Bolchevique took place in southern Spain from 1918 to 1921, and it was characterized by widespread protests and attempts at revolution. Inspired by the overthrow of the Russian Czar in 1917, anarchist day-laborers in the south of Spain took part in a series of uprisings. Elsewhere in Spain, 1917 was a big year for strikes, as this was the year in which the Spanish socialists organized a General Strike against the Spanish monarchy (which was violently quashed by the army). In 1919, there were especially large amounts of great agrarian strikes that were eventually crushed by the army and the Guardia Civil. The Spanish public became very interested in Russia, especially after the Bolshevik Revolution. The 1917 revolution in Russia made a huge impact on the Spanish public, provoking debate about whether capitalism or socialism was a better system and sparking even more militancy of the proletariat. It was in this environment that the October Revolution was received with excitement and hope for the anarcho-syndicalists and nervousness for the bourgeoisie. With the loss of faith in the traditional value systems of capitalism, class structure, and democracy came an increasing interest in the new social structures that were being more and more firmly established in Soviet Russia and a fascination with this “new” society called Communism.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> The Spanish public started to learn more about the ideology behind the Russian Revolution in the early 1920s, particularly in the magazine *La Batalla* (Cobb, *La cultura y el pueblo* 41). The Unión Cultural Proletaria was founded in 1922 by Ángel Pumarega for the purpose of providing correct information about occurrences in Russia to the Spanish public (*La cultura y el pueblo* 25-26). Later on, many translations of Russian novels would appear in Spain during 1920-1936; indicative of the reading public’s growing interest in Russia (Gil Casado 131), and interest in Communism would become especially strong in Spain near the end of Primo de Rivera’s dictatorship in January of 1930 (*La cultura y el pueblo* 8). As Christopher H. Cobb puts it, the Spanish were captivated by Russian politics and literature because they felt that the difficulties suffered by the Russian people corresponded in some way with the difficulties in their lives: “...cuyas dificultades pudieran

There are references to concepts of the Bolshevik Revolution, to revolutionary activity happening in Spain, and to the increasingly popular concepts of Anarchism in *La tierra*.

*La tierra* makes reference to the militant strikes and rebellions going on in urban areas:

RICARDO. [...] Si no leyérais en los periódicos esas filfas de las huelgas y los paros, y si no os envenenara uno de esos vivos que ca vez cobran más y trabajan menos, no imitaríais a la gentuza de las capitales. (30-31)

Rafael was involved in a riot in Barcelona, which should remind the audience of the bloody *Semana Trágica* in Barcelona in July of 1909<sup>71</sup>, and other great strikes that were brutally repressed by the military:

CURRO. ¿Conoces al guarda que está junto a Polilla [don Diego's other bodyguard]?

RAFAEL. No.

CURRO. ¿No habrás tú visto esa cara detrás de un sable y debajo de un casco?

RAFAEL. (*Después de mirar fijamente a Bautista.*) Pué ser.

CURRO. ¿Y no te se hubiera clavao aquel sable en la barriga si uno de tus compañeros no hubiese derribao de un tiro al que lo manejaba?... Fué en Barcelona. Acuérdate. (52-53)

The play also references the increase in organization among industrial workers in the cities as opposed to among rural workers when Rafael hands his father an envelope with

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corresponder aunque fuera indirectamente, con la actualidad española" (*La cultura y el pueblo* 25). Russia and Spain had similar political and social situations, and Russia came to be a romantic model for some for establishing a new system where the working classes would become empowered (Gil Casado 132).

<sup>71</sup> The *Semana Trágica* was a reaction to the disproportionately high toll on the working class during the Spanish-American war and the colonial wars in Morocco, plus the wage reductions and layoffs that were a result of economic recession in 1908-1909. During the Spanish-American War, the loss of lives among soldiers in the Pacific, in Cuba, and in the Caribbean was highest among the working classes. Dissatisfied by its failure in Cuba after the Disaster of 1898, the army tried to save face by regaining power elsewhere—by beginning colonial campaigns in Morocco. Working-class soldiers were conscripted to go to Morocco to occupy territory that was rich in mineral deposits, and they were often victims of violent wars with Moroccan tribes. They perceived their efforts as serving the personal interests of the king and of mining owners because they were sent to defend mineral-rich territories (Preston 29-31). The *Semana Trágica* began as an anti-militarist and economic general strike and escalated into anti-clerical protests and church burnings (Preston 29).

money—three thousand pesetas—and says, “Por fortuna, no están todos los obreros tan desorganizados como ustedes” (56). (López Pinillos’ early newspaper articles attest to this problem of their uprisings failing from lack of organization.) The play also reflects how farm workers were catching on to the idea that in other parts of Spain, workers were joining together to fight against their unfair working conditions (albeit with a little confusion of terminology) when Zaratán says, “La verdad es que vamos teniendo organismo” (31).

A particular passage in Act I reflects the familiarity that peasants might have had with the concepts of revolution, especially in the wake of the Russian Revolution. Juana, a minor character who works in don Diego’s kitchen, hears the protests against the baker and enters the stage to find out what is going on:

ANA. ¡Muera Donato!

LAS MUJERES. ¡Muera!

[...]

JUANA. Pero, ¿qué ocurre? ¿Hay aquí «revolución»?

ZARATÁN. ¡La habrá, si no la hay, que pa eso tenemos engallaura de machos!

JUANA. (*Colérica.*) ¿Y pa meterme en la «revolución» me has sacao de la cortijá? (18-19)

Apparently, the workers have a simplified and naive knowledge of what is involved in a revolution; they seem to confuse it with a single strike or protest, but they are catching on. Later on, in the same act, Ricardo makes a reference to Lenin while insulting Zaratán: “¡Cuidao que eres grande, Zaratán! Lenín, comparao contigo, es una pulga!” (34). These allusions demonstrate that awareness of the Russian Revolution and its key figures had spread to even the most rural areas of Spain. Both López Pinillos and his audience must have known enough about Russian events to catch these references. The play also reflects growing Anarchic and Communistic sentiment among workers in Spain when Rafael suggests that the workers not demand a raise in wages, but the land itself to farm collectively.

The relevance of the subject matter of *La tierra* to the audience's interest in current events and politics helped to bring the workers' plight closer to his audience. It also helped that López Pinillos made his protagonists suffer from current and real problems so that the spectator will feel even closer to the predicament. Making his protagonists suffer from these helps to put a 'name' and a 'face' to the people who are the most affected by the land problem in real life.

The distribution of land ownership had been a huge problem in the Spanish countryside, especially in the south, for a long time, and it became more problematic after the unamortization of Church lands and common lands in the 1830s and 1850s. Instead of providing a means for the poor to obtain land, it enabled only wealthy businessmen and wealthy landlords to buy the land. Because of a surge in population growth that occurred all over Spain during the 1900s, an increasing number of peasants without land emerged, especially in the south. This population growth and the unamortization only resulted in more exploitation of the peons, making them work even more hours for less pay. Paul Preston describes the post-unamortization situation as follows:

The *latifundio* system was consolidated and the new landlords were keen for a return on their investment. Unwilling to engage in expensive projects of irrigation, they preferred instead to build their profits on the exploitation of the great armies of landless day labourers, the *braceros* and *jornaleros* (20).

Hunger and malnutrition were rampant among landless peasants because they were starving and in need of land which they could cultivate for their own subsistence, and they had been deprived of the common lands that they were once allowed to farm communally. These peons lived with disease in appalling conditions, working only forty days of poorly paid work per year (Jackson 10).

The opening scene of *La tierra* has the workers on don Diego's *latifundio* describe the gravity of their hunger while they rest outside the tavern on the town plaza. The opening lines of the play are between José and his son-in-law, Paco, and they demonstrate how hunger puts them (and thus other day laborers in Spain) close to serious illness and death, and that it affects not only adults but also newborns:

PACO. ¿Medio pitillo?

JOSÉ. Mientras me queden... (*Saca un cigarrillo y le da la mitad.*) Esto emborracha al hambre.

PACO. (*Cambiándole el papel al medio cigarrillo.*) Y usted, ¿no fuma?

JOSÉ. Cuando me apriete la necesidad. ¿Qué molienda hicisteis anoche con la entadura?

PACO. La misma que al mediodía: unos tomates y unos mendrugos.

JOSÉ. Y si no faltaran...

PACO. Escaparíamos usted y yo; pero usted y yo no estamos criando.

JOSÉ. (*Disimulando la inquietud.*) ¿Marcha mal mi Caridá?

PACO. Marcha a un paso como pa quearse hética en un decir Jesús. Y lo peor es que el niño va todavía más ligero. Ayer no hizo más que llorar. Y es hambre. Se enrabia en el pecho sin sacar ná... y llora de hambre la criatura.

JOSÉ. Hambre a los dos meses... (10-12)

Although the workers in Andalusia were starving more than ever, it was illegal to go hunting or otherwise gather food from the landowner's land, and the Guardia Civil was there "as in an occupied territory" (Jackson 10) to shoot anyone who did. Paul Preston writes: "Paternalism was replaced by repression as the Civil Guard was created to form a rural armed police with the principal function of guarding the big estates from the labourers who worked on them" (20). This was especially problematic after the Trienio Bolchevique. Paul Preston confirms the existence of the danger that many workers faced if they tried to go hunting: "The gathering of windfall crops or the watering of beasts, even the collection of firewood were deemed to be 'collective kleptomania' and were prevented by the vigilance of armed guards" (37). This situation also appears in *La tierra* when Paco tells José of his plans to go hunting on don Diego's property so that he can feed Caridad:



PACO. Esta madrugada iré al coto.

JOSÉ. ¿Pa que te peguen un balazo... con la vigilancia que hay ahora?

PACO. Pero, usted ¿sabe cómo se pone Caridá al ver el desconsuelo del chiquillo?... Le calentaría el corazón y la cabeza a un hombre de nieve. Y, como yo no soy de nieve, esta madrugada iré al coto. (12-13)

Paco is aware of the danger—he risks being shot by don Diego’s private squad of eighty guards or the Guardia Civil—but it is his only resort to save his wife and baby.

In real-life Spain, peasants hardly got anywhere by striking. When one group of workers would be on strike, the landowner or factory owner could easily find others who would be willing to work, due to the surplus of workers and the desperation among them. The Civil Guard or the owner’s personal guards would protect the ‘new’ workers in case the strikers tried to prevent them from going in to work. These conditions are exhibited in *La tierra* when don Diego threatens his workers that he will find many others to harvest his fields since they are on strike:

Entérense los cabecillas y los sacaos de quicio con embustes por los cabecillas. ¡Esto se acabó! Y se acabó, porque, si mañana no empezáis a trabajar, pasao, tendré aquí cien hombres que trabajen. ¿Os enteráis? Cien hombres que trabajarán sin miedo, porque ochenta guardas con ochenta rifles, y un batallón que recibiré, si lo pido, meterán en cintura a los que saquen los pies del plato. (48)

Judging by the history of Spain at the moment of *La tierra*’s production and by critical reviews, *La tierra* truly did dramatize the land problem that was looming large in Spain and the simultaneous growing popularity of leftist political thought and the growing awareness for the need for justice. Miguel Portoles says in his review printed on January 31, 1921 in *El Mundo*:

Constituye ese aspecto de malestar hondísimo una actualidad tan palpitante como generalizada que a España afecta quizá más intensamente que a nación alguna: el comunismo agrario. «La tierra», de López Pinillos, no es, en efecto, otra cosa que un grito de rebelión, de ansias de redención, de vida,

por el trabajo, siquiera el trabajo, en sí propio, no baste a defenderla, y de ahí el fondo de justicia que late en lo fundamental del nuevo drama. (2)

L. Bejarano explains in his review in *El Liberal* on January 30, 1921 how the problems represented in *La tierra* are representative of many land laborers all over Spain who are oppressed by their landlords: “Yo vi, hace dos años, este drama de «Parmeno» estrenado anoche en el Español. Lo vi en tierras de Salamanca, en Villanueva de la Orbada, en un puebluco que se alza en la parda llanura de la Armuña...” (3). Bejarano predicts that the theme of *La tierra* and the way that López Pinillos presents it will enlighten and resonate with the audience:

¡Oh, la tragedia de los pueblos de señorío, —cientos miles de pueblos en esta España dolorosa—, desconocida en las ciudades y desdeñada por los legisladores!

«Parmeno» la ha llevado a la escena con absoluta fidelidad y con saludable crudeza. De todos sus dramas este será, sin duda, el que más se adentró en las entrañas del público... (3)

The way that López Pinillos presented the material of the play did indeed move his audience, as evidenced by the critical reviews. L. Bejarano said that it was “perfect” in *El Liberal* on January 30, 1921, and he comments on the audience’s applause:

Como pieza literaria, el drama es perfecto. El primer acto, sobrio y recto, tiene belleza, y la melodramática escena final del segundo, un aliento trágico imponderable.

Algunas escenas y muchas frases merecieron aplausos en las alturas, y toda la sala prorrumpió en ovaciones y vítores al final de las jornadas y de la obra... (3)

In his review of *La tierra*, Manuel Machado praises López Pinillos’ technique and confirms the audience’s positive response:

[...C]omo obra de arte teatral «La tierra» tiene situaciones admirables de vigor dramático, que está escrita en un sobrio y valiente castellano, cuajada de frases de un efecto innegable. Que el segundo acto, particularmente, es un alarde de habilidad técnica en la pintura y el movimiento de los personajes. Y, finalmente, que el público la interrumpió muchas veces con grandes

aplausos, llamando repetidas veces a escena a López Pinillos. (*La Libertad*, January 30, 1921, 4)

Machado appreciates López Pinillos' skill in treating difficult issues ("Una vez más y en el más difícil de los terrenos se acreditó la fuerte mano, el «fuerte puño de dramaturgo» del admirable «Parmeno»,” 4) and hints at his strong personal style of expression.

Miguel Portoles effusively praises *La tierra*'s construction, calling the play vigorous, and he includes many more details about the audience's praise of the play in *El Mundo* on January 31, 1921:

Ateniéndonos, por lo tanto, únicamente a la obra literaria, a la producción artística, hemos de aplaudir una vez más, sin regateos, el vigor intensísimo y la habilidad con que está construida, singularmente el melodramático final del segundo acto, que levantó una verdadera tempestad de aplausos, al igual que había ocurrido al terminar el acto primero. Aplausos que, con más o menos vehemencia, se reprodujeron a los principales pasajes del drama y al finalizar el mismo, siendo López Pinillos aclamado al presentarse en escena incontables veces, para agradecer tan inequívocos tributos de admiración a sus talentos. El éxito del dramaturgo fue grande, rotundo, definitivo, en la noche de su estreno, y se vio plenamente refrendado en la tarde y noche de ayer. (2)

The critical reviews suggest that López Pinillos' play had a powerful effect on his spectators and that it was well-liked by them. In *La tierra*, the audience sees what is actually happening on the *latifundios* of Andalusia through the protagonists' eyes. The playwright aims to get his spectator to identify with and sympathize with the protagonists, even though they are of a very different social class and living situation from his audience. He makes his characters accessible to his audience by showing them to be noble. He shows a full range of their emotions and pulls on the spectators' heartstrings so that the audience will feel the protagonists' problems as if they were their own. López Pinillos brings the Andalusian peasants' problems closer to the spectator also by incorporating real situations happening all around them in that very moment in history. The real occurrences also lend realism to the

story and appeal to the audience's interest in current political issues and enhanced the interest in the subject matter of the play. The characters that generate pity do so not only for themselves but also for workers in real life who face similar predicaments. This helps the spectator to realize that somewhere out there, real people—people not so different from themselves, with the same feelings and hopes—desperately need and deserve justice.

## CONCLUSION

Through a mixture of fashionable theatrical conventions and his unique aesthetic, José López Pinillos dealt with the injustice wrought by *caciquismo* in Andalusia in the three social plays under examination. López Pinillos and his social plays were an important and special contribution to the early modern social play, and hopefully, this study begins to give him and his social theater a well-deserved place in the history of pre-Civil War theater.

The role of the intelligentsia was vital to the creation of social literature. The spirit of the times and its turbulent political climate moved writers in both Spain and Latin America toward a literature that criticized bourgeois society for its decadence and social irresponsibility, condemned national problems, and brought the working class' issues to the forefront. López Pinillos, like many other journalist-writers of his time, was a part of the intellectual elite, and like other members of this elite, writing (both journalism and fiction) was his way of responding to the whirlwind of social and political unrest. Spain's quest to re-define itself in the wake of a national disaster, loss of faith in a crumbling and corrupt government, and an evolving class struggle that slowly gave the working class an increasingly visible role in politics, are reflected in the unique aesthetic vision of his works, and in turn this aesthetic makes them important instruments for social change.

His unique life experience, including his youth spent in rural Andalusia, where he was the victim of the whims of his local *cacique*, inspired him to write powerful condemnations of *caciquismo* and the intolerable conditions that it created. His experiences

in Madrid as a journalist for widely circulating newspapers were also very important to his writing. His frequent assignments as their correspondent reporter in Andalusia and the milieu in which he moved—comprised of other young and liberal journalists who were also concerned about the state of social and political affairs in Spain (many of whom would become key figures of the Generation of 1898)—furthered his exposure to the social and political.

A feeling of solidarity between writers and intellectuals with the working class was not uncommon during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century in Spain and Latin America, and writers and journalists like López Pinillos turned their thoughts, sympathies, and pens toward the working class. Throughout his career as journalist, novelist, and playwright, he expressed disapproval of *caciquismo* and his concern for how it affected rural Andalusia, especially with regard to its poor *braceros*. Anyone can see that Andalusia and its *campesinos* hold a special place in his heart. He feels a strong connection with them, and their poverty and lack of resources for bettering their lives troubles him greatly. The issues that he harps on in his newspaper articles resurface in his social dramas. His concern for the rural workers of Andalusia in his writing was his own response to the growing awareness in the Spanish consciousness of the unjust economic, political, and social problems that day laborers were facing at the hands of large landowners who had too much political power, and his incorporation of their concerns into his drama ran parallel to the changing role of the working class characters on the Spanish stage, where working-class characters went from providers of comic relief to protagonists with an active role in defending their honor and eventually their right to justice.

To convey his message, López Pinillos harnesses elements of melodrama, Naturalism, and the ever-popular plot line of the honor play in *El pantano*, *Esclavitud*, and *La tierra* to denounce the uneven distribution of land and *caciquismo* as the cause of political (and moral) corruption and the starvation, death, oppression, and forced emigration of farm workers all over Andalusia and to show that these enormous social problems need to be addressed. These conventions were natural choices for him, as they were much in demand in the commercial theaters of Madrid and also because within them, he was able to gear each of the plays that we study here toward demonstrating the existence of the terrible conditions of corruption, injustice, and poverty in rural Andalusia as caused by *caciquismo* and fostering consciousness in his audience members of them.

*El pantano* demonstrates that the rural south of Spain is an unhealthy environment because of *caciquismo*, and it must undergo change. The family's state of moral degeneration (from their accepting the local *cacique*'s funds in exchange for maintaining an affair with the family matriarch) is echoed by the family's mental and physical degeneration, which symbolizes *caciquismo* as the cause of corruption of Andalusia's moral fiber and the decay its quality of life. The play proposes that modernization is the cure for improving the lives of people in rural Andalusia.

*Esclavitud* challenges the poor's position in the social hierarchy by making them the masters of their own destiny and by showing that they have noble qualities of honor and dignity. It also shows the *caciques*' abusiveness and conveys the message that it is everyone's task—not only the oppressed's—to stop the injustice.

*La tierra* presents the situation of exploitation and extreme poverty that many landless farm laborers faced on the latifundios of Andalusia. It is a poignant and rather

accurate description of the dynamics that were at work in real-life Andalusia at the time of its staging, and López Pinillos expresses himself with more violence and passion than in any of his other plays. He sets out to expose the living conditions of these people and the few options available to them for bettering their lot and to make the spectator feel deeply their fear and desperation.

Conspicuous in the vast majority of López Pinillos' writings (including his novels, novellas, journalism, and plays) are ugliness, deformity, and degradation; frightening, terrifying, and violent acts and images; and exaggeration. These aspects help in his characterization and point up the contrasts and extremes that are a part of melodrama. His extreme expression of emotions, pain, and gore guide the spectator toward sympathizing with the protagonists and desiring retribution against the villain.

López Pinillos also contrasts horrifying imagery with surprisingly beautiful poetic expression and even the comic (although it is dark comedy). This unexpected admixture of the grotesque, the pathetic, the exaggerated, and the horrifying with the comic, the beautiful, and the poetic is surprising, and it serves a purpose. Attractive and noble characters and actions coexisting with ugly and detestable characters, plus beautiful and poetic descriptions of the Andalusian countryside in the midst of all of the misery there may help the spectator to appreciate the difference between them, just like Victor Hugo's prologue to *Cromwell* says that the juxtaposition of the beautiful with the grotesque aids in appreciating the beautiful:

Sublime upon sublime scarcely presents a contrast, and we need a little rest from everything, even the beautiful. On the other hand, the grotesque seems to be a halting-place, a mean term, a starting-point whence one rises toward the beautiful with a fresher and keener perception. The salamander gives relief to the water-sprite; the gnome heightens the charm of the sylph. (Hugo 370)



All of the contrasts and extremes in López Pinillos' writing highlight the difference between good and evil, powerful and powerless, autonomy and dependence, dignity and humiliation, and victim and victimizer. The shock from passing between these extremes will shock the spectator out of a passive attitude and will make him see things from a refreshed perspective that will make the wretchedness of life for the poor and the cruelty and injustice existent in society stand out to him and will hopefully push him to seek social change in his society when the theatrical spectacle is over. The deformed and horrifying images contrasted with the beautiful and poetic also express López Pinillos' admiration and sympathy for the rural people of Andalusia and his love for its landscape at the same time as his horror and rage at what is happening there.

López Pinillos has been both criticized and praised for his violent vision. Some modern critics manifest an especial distaste for it<sup>72</sup> while others, while they may disparage him, grudgingly appreciate his uniqueness.<sup>73</sup> Despite these negative assessments, however, he defended his vision, and other critics—both contemporaries of his and recent—realize that he had a good reason for his vision and have come to appreciate it as the best way to express his times and to fight for change. López Pinillos himself declared in a self-critique published in *La Tribuna* that his plays were not meant to be pleasant but to bring to light Spain's problems with the intention of helping to fix them:

En el prólogo con que encabezó Bernard Shaw sus comedias no “alegres”, decía que las calificaba de francamente desagradables, porque su fuerza dramática sólo se proponía obligar al espectador a encararse con hechos desagradables... A esto se podría añadir que es posible agradar a un público inteligente, ahondando en las cosas desagradables, cuando el escritor—que

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<sup>72</sup> Harold L. Boudreau states: “For the most part, López Pinillos' work suffers from crudity, lack of restraint, and an insistence on violent effects at the expense of all other aesthetic concerns” (485-486).

<sup>73</sup> See Antonio Castellón (152), Francisco Ruíz Ramón (63), José Carlos Mainer, *Literatura y pequeña burguesía en España (Notas 1890-1950)* (99), Eugenio de Nora (263), and M.F.A. (1).

hurga en la llaga con intenciones de médico y no de verdugo—siente el ambicioso deseo de contribuir a que desaparezcan. (qtd. in Cejador 207 (footnote))

Julio Cejador, a contemporary of López Pinillos, justifies López Pinillos' crudeness of language and violent images because the unpleasant reality of Spain requires this kind of expression: "Pinillos es duro hasta la crudeza, porque describe la áspera vida española; dramático, porque lo es el carácter español y el carácter de los problemas y las pasiones españolas; sincero y veraz, parco y pintoresco, porque éstas son nuestras cualidades eternas" (Cejador 208). Recent critics also realize that López Pinillos' shock value was intended to provoke the audience to desire change.<sup>74</sup> And, Dominique Grard also maintains that López Pinillos' attitude sprung from the need of making others realize that change was needed:

El autor da una imagen sarcástica—y no desprovista de amargura—de España cuyo atraso pone de manifiesto, al igual que la ignorancia y la rusticidad de sus habitantes, como si quisiera herir a sus compatriotas con el fin de impulsarlos a echar una mirada crítica sobre el país. (36)

And his public loved it. López Pinillos' most violent plays are also his most popular ones. *Esclavitud* and *La tierra* enjoy the most runs out of all of his nineteen plays, and their critical reviews are very positive. His public generally loved melodrama's sensationalism and sentimentalism, and therefore loved his "melodramatic family honor plays filled with distorted sexuality, bloody revenge" which included "often an element of class struggle and social protest" (Harold L. Boudreau of the *Columbia Dictionary of Modern European Literature* 485-486). The large amount of approval that his plays received from his audiences at their performances confirms their positive reception.

López Pinillos' social plays are important as a reflection of the tastes of the theater-going public of the period and its growing interest in the class struggle and social problems,

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<sup>74</sup>See Eugenio de Nora (275).

especially in commercial theaters. Their reception suggests that although his audiences liked seeing the jolly side of Andalusia, they also enjoyed seeing its tragic underbelly and were ready to see plays about the working class' plight and its avenging itself. *Caciquismo* was a common complaint of many very successful novels of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that take place in Andalusia (Grard 22), and the fact that these novels that spoke out against *caciquismo* sold well during López Pinillos' lifetime indicates a substantial market for this subject. That the public that purchased these books was most likely also the same public that went to the theater and acclaimed rural drama, especially Benavente's rural tragedies, suggests its readiness to see a more serious side of Andalusia. Further suggestive of his audience's mentality, the popularity of melodrama meant that the society that consumed it was ready for social change: "To believe in this possibility [for change] takes both an original mind and a society that wants to believe in that mind. Ibsen may have shocked his audience in *Ghosts*, but there was certainly an audience there that wanted that shock" (Sharp 274). López Pinillos' definitely had an original mind, and his great success among commercial audiences in Madrid suggests that they were ready for him to express the spirit of their times and that they were open to hearing about change. Therefore, López Pinillos' plays capture his audience's concerns in this moment of political and social upheaval.

While many artists and authors portray the rural Andalusia with an idealized bucolic image, where simple and happy rural people and their agrarian way of life are looked upon as quaint and even enviable, López Pinillos represents the Andalusian countryside and its traditions in such a way that his spectators will appreciate the beauty of them while still seeing the injustice and the true power relations at work there. While he does point out its beauty and quaintness, these are shaded with harsh criticism of the oppressed state of farm

workers and of greedy *caciques*' abuses. López Pinillos holds a deforming mirror up to his world to show the ugliness of Spanish reality, especially with regard to the injustice that exists in rural Andalusia. But he changes mirrors frequently enough to hold up beautiful reflections of his world that remind his audience of its people's nobility of character and the beauty of the land in spite of its horrible reality.

His talent for representing Andalusia, his genuine passion for its workers' cause, his clever dialogue, and his aesthetic uniqueness made López Pinillos' social plays successful in theaters both during and shortly after his lifetime, and his works deserve to be remembered and studied. He wrote in accordance with conventions that his audiences would love, while also taking risks both aesthetically and by seriously questioning the political and social practices of his own and his public's very same social class. He was not afraid to present plays which contained strong social messages and a dose of hard reality, and he pulls out all of the stops to get his spectators to notice that the structures that cause suffering in the Andalusia must be stopped. He was right in taking these risks, for his plays that treated difficult issues were right on target with what his audiences wanted and were warmly received. His writing influenced both theatrical trends of his time and later generations of playwrights and writers. He is credited with helping to establish rural drama as a generic norm and making it part of the Spanish theater's repertoire during the pre-Civil War epoch (Holloway<sup>75</sup>), and critics recognize that his inclusion of the violent, cynical, cruel, grotesque, and deviant in his social plays support the idea that he is a precursor to

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<sup>75</sup> "No less than eight of the Spanish playwright's rural dramas were staged in Madrid between 1913 and 1923... The insistent presence of these rural dramas on the Spanish stage in a relatively short span of years resulted in the establishment of a generic norm" (19). Holloway quotes Barry E. Weingarten's dissertation titled "Modern Spanish Rural Drama" to support his opinion: "Accordingly, Weingarten affirms that, 'Although Joaquín Dicenta gave the rural drama its definitive forms with *Daniel* and *El señor feudal* [The Feudal Lord], it was José López Pinillos who elaborated upon the different modes of the genre and made it part of the repertory of the Spanish theater [of the pre-Civil War era].'" (19-20).

*Tremendismo*, a form of realism most often connected to postwar novelist Camilo José Cela that seeks to especially reflect aspects of life that cause suffering, bitterness, embarrassment, degradation, and anguish.<sup>76</sup>

This particular study opens López Pinillos's work for further investigations that compares and contrasts it to other playwrights of the pre-Civil War era who addressed *caciquismo* as an oppressive force. Regardless of what approach future scholars take, it is certain that López Pinillos' theater merits further study.

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<sup>76</sup> Harold L. Boudreau of the *Columbia Dictionary of Modern European Literature* names Pinillos as a clear predecessor of *Tremendismo* and of Camilo José Cela: "With hindsight, the contemporary reader can see López Pinillos as a predecessor of Camilo José Cela and the so-called *tremendismo* (sensationalism) of the 1940s" (485). Eugenio de Nora categorizes López Pinillos' novella *El ladronzuelo* (1911) as his most *tremendista* work (271).

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